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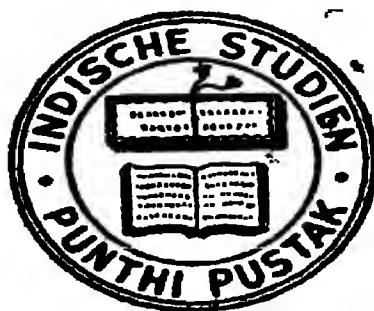


**CIVIL REBELLION  
IN THE  
FRONTIER BENGAL**



# **Civil Rebellion in the Frontier Bengal ( 1760-1805 )**

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## PREFACE

I have great pleasure in introducing to the reading public this valuable piece of research by Dr. Binod Sankar Das.

It is a well-known fact that the impact of British rule in Bengal led to many confrontations between the people and their alien rulers. Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittaganj, the earliest of the territorial possessions of the East India Company had the unique position of reacting to the introduction of Western rule first and affecting the political and economic system of a colonial power after a period of strife and strain. Of these Midnapur and the South-Western regions of Bengal being on the frontier-line of British possessions in the East attracted the attention of the new-comers most obviously on strategic considerations and they made special attempts to bring these regions under their colonial system as speedily as possible. This is the background of the many diverse kinds of policies and relationships that were evolved from the involvement of the acquisitive tendencies of colonial rule and the resistance of the indigenous elements. A study of Midnapur during the early British period in the light of original records will undoubtedly offer an illustration of the new epoch that was about to dawn.

The book reveals an elaborate study of scattered materials carried out with thoroughness and a high degree of critical ability written in a lucid style with an academic objectivity of approach. The book unfolds in a series of graphic accounts a very important phase of the British rule in India. I hope it will commend itself to all serious students of Indian History.



## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>C.P.C.</b>	... Calendar of Persian Correspondence.
<b>Com. of Rev.</b>	... Committee of Revenue.
<b>F.W.</b>	... Fort William.
<b>G.G.P.</b>	... Proceedings of the Governor-General in Council.
<b>I.H.R.C.</b>	... Indian Historical Record Commission.
<b>I.H.Q.</b>	... Indian Historical Quarterly.
<b>J.A.S.B.</b>	... Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
<b>Mid. Rec.</b>	... Midnapur Records—Firminger.
<b>O.C.</b>	... Original Consultations.
<b>Progs. G.G. in C.</b>	... Proceedings of the Governor-General in Council.
<b>R.B.P.</b>	... Proceedings of the Revenue Board.
<b>S.P.D.</b>	... Selections from the Peshwa Daftar.
<b>S.V.D.</b>	... Selections from the Vaidya Daftar.
<b>Seir</b>	... Seir-ul-Mutakherin.





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## INTRODUCTION

The South-West Bengal Presidency in the last half of the 18th Century included the districts of Midnapur and the Jungle Mahals. The latter was dismembered into some Bhumi-ending tracts of Bihar and Bengal by 1833. In ancient literature beginning with the Jaina Acharanga Sutta (6th Century B.C.) this region was described generally as Rāḍha. The South-West Bengal comprising two main districts of West Bengal i.e., Midnapur and Bankura is situated in the cross-sections of two cultural streams of Indo-Europeans and native aboriginal elements of the region. The name of the chief towns also owe their origins to aboriginal population of the area. With varied natural phenomena and cultural synthesis this region from the remote past had strategic, political and commercial importance to the successive foreign conquerors and also the native inhabitants of the soil. Paucity of adequate archaeological evidences and historical literature is a great hindrance to construct a connected socio-political history of the region. Stray references in the Vedic, Buddhist, Jaina and the Brahmanical literature and the unearthed archaeological remains near the Susunia hills, in the coastal belt of ancient Tamralipta and along the river-beds of the Kansai and the Subarnarekha have proved beyond doubt that racial migrations took place along the river valleys and the oceanic coast-line of the South-West Bengal.

From the remote past this region was represented as conglomerations of tiny, self-sustained, village-level politico-economic units. They had possibly developed from the roots of pre-historic tribal organisations on the basis of community ownership of lands as the only means of production. They maintained the principles of primitive communism, supplied sustenance to the institution of monarchy at the top and failed to maintain their separate existence when they were confronted

with the foreign aggressions. But they proved their uncommon power of recovery when the foreign arms were withdrawn. In the history of the South-West Bengal the impact of the foreign strands on the potentiality of the non-Aryan native elements had played the major role. In the first phase of her history the village units came to cross swords with the Aryan immigrants and Brahmanical ideas and institutions. In the muslim period the cycle of foreign impact had widened as Islam covering the greater part of Asia challenged and dominated the life and culture of the people. In the third phase, the cycle of this impact still more widened, the challenge becoming still more penetrating and deep-rooted completely revolutionising the economic life of the people and their culture. It was the formidable impact of the western imperialism and capitalism felt by the little village-level folk-moots of South-West Bengal that challenged the basic values of life—the values which supplied sustenance and justification to the successive governmental institutions in the region. These incessant challenges through foreign influences, a general feature of the Indian history and the responses which they evoked supplied ethnic homogeneity to the region in spite of different political boundaries at the surface. The story of the responses have neither yet been fully unearthed, nor the identity of the geographic units are above general acceptance. But the literary works of the Hindu and Muslim periods depicted the life and struggle of the people in colours of gold which supplied valuable materials to the students of the regional history.

The year 1757 is considered as the year of commencement of the British-raj in Bengal. The battle of Plassey was a turning point in the history of the South-Western districts of Bengal. The military campaigns undertaken by the Marathas, the nawabs and the Company's Officers over the salt and forest tracts of the South-West Bengal, the hesitant revenue experiments affecting economic conditions of the people and the cultural splendour of the Bhum-rajahs of

the Jungle Mahals and Bishnupur became a story of the past. In 1760-61 the East India Company became the Zamindar of Midnapur with two provoked agrarian disturbances the nature of which was misunderstood by the scholars. The British civilian historians like J. C. Price, W. K. Firminger and other local officials like H. V. Bailey, F. W. Robertson in their revenue reports and despatches described those revolts as uprisings of bandits and lawless elements of the population. Some loyal Indian authors also, following their beaten track, analysed those agrarian discontents in a very contemptuous language. More recently these movements had variously been described by some modern historians as "the genesis of trade union movements", "the first national war of independence", "the baronial resistance of feudal character to the intrusion of Hindu culture". But an analysis of the socio-economic forces at work would testify to the fact that these descriptions are superfluous and inadequate.

The pioneer in the historical research on the South-West Bengal Presidency including three eastern districts of Orissa was Padmashree Paramananda Acharya. It was he who worked hard to collect all the archæological and historical materials of the region and tried to give them a systematic shape until the last moments of his death. To the research students his invaluable contributions in the field of historical scholarship is undeniable. The historians like Dr. K. K. Datta and Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri have added new dimensions to the history of socio-economic movements that took place during the formative period of the British rule in Bengal in the late 18th century. Now-a-days modern research scholars, following the Marxist line of thinking put emphasis on the economic factors as the ultimate determining factor in analysing the socio-economic movements of the period. The present author takes this opportunity to pay homage to all his predecessors. While he still thinks that geographical conditions, changing aspirations and achievements of the people, racial migrations, challenges of nature and their responses from the people,

besides the economic factors, all have their contributory quota in shaping the historical developments of a people. No body can say the last word in the historical literature and nobody possibly can examine all the historical materials. The author of this book by way of acknowledging the debts of his pioneers in the field pledges to unfold some new informations on the subject and endeavours to discover some new relations of facts hitherto unknown to the reading intelligentsia.

Since the reign of Akbar, there was an infiltration of two types of foreigners into the self-sustained economic units of this region, i.e., (a) a warrior-class, mainly non-Indian Muslims and the Punjabi Hindus, (b) a money-lending class of Gujarat and Rajputana. Their increasing pressure with the introduction of a new type of money economy, conversion of common-lands into feudal lands, decline of village commodity production into capitalist mode of production led to the fast pauperisation of rural labour class. The advent of the Company's rule only accelerated this process of pauperisation. The Company's officers at the helm of affairs, local rulers and the already existent Indian rulers were confronted with three-fold interconnected problems, viz., (i) how to collect taxes, (ii) who would be regarded as the original owner of land, and (iii) how to establish direct contact with the original producers. Three answers came from three grades of officers already mentioned, leading to the tacit acceptance at least of ownership over lands by the Company but not over its usufruct.

The chief features of the Pre-Permanent Settlement period may be catalogued thus :

(a) gradual Europeanisation of administrative machinery and the enhancement of magisterial power of the collectors, (b) the idea of 'local police local responsibility' was abandoned but no definite thanadary system was evolved, leading thus to the result that the thanadars were discredited in the countryside, (c) rampant gang-robbery and corruption in the administrative set-up, (d) recognition of zamindari ownership over lands but not over its full fruits, gradual pauperisation of agricultural

community leading to country wide crimes, (e) the period also witnessed the rapid emergence of the middle class. The genesis of the Chuar-Paik rebellion may be found in the demerits of the Permanent Settlement :—

(i) over-assessment and fixation of money-rent, (ii) no extra imposts were allowed but remained in practice leading to the entry of a new capitalist and officer class into the scene, (iii) relative role of produce and money-rent in the mode of payment, (iv) the system of usurious advance paving the way for the decline of independent peasantry and consequently for the growth of a section of rich and privileged peasantry. But there were some specific causes of the Chuar rebellion, such as, resumption of paikan lands and service-tenure. Zamindary tenures were liable to sale for arrears of jamma. So grievances were both psychological and financial.

The paik-rebellion flared up with the active participation of the Raja of Mayurbhanj. This region had a strategic importance. The rulers always enjoyed exemption from taxation and were regarded as the 'wardens of the marches'. At first the rulers tacitly accepted the British rule. But the open defiance of British rule and reinstatement of Jagannath Dhal of Dhalbhum opened the eyes of Damodar Bhanj, the Mayurbhanj ruler, and sharp clash of interests developed over Amardachour and Bhelorachour. After his demise in 1796 Rani Sumitra followed a conciliatory policy until Orissa was conquered by the Company in 1803.

The relation of the Mayurbhanj rulers with the Company was inseparably connected with the gradual decline of the Bhonsle power over Orissa and the extension and consolidation of the British grip round this region. There were frequent frontier disturbances arising out of various reasons which found their climacteric point in the Chuar rebellion in 1799.

It is author's pleasant duty to express his deep sense of reverence and gratitude to his mother and to his uncle Sri Bhagabat Chandra Das, a distinguished lawyer and educationist of the region who inspired him in this task and to Dr. S. B.

Chaudhuri, M.A., Ph.D., the former Vice-Chancellor of Burdwan University who as his teacher in the Presidency College, Calcutta since 1951 and as his research supervisor in the Burdwan University helped him with constant advice and guidance in spite of his various academic pre-occupation. He is very kind to write a Preface for this book. He is also thankful to Dr. K. K. Datta, formerly Vice-Chancellor of Patna University and to Dr. Holden Furber of the University of Pennsylvania for their valuable comments. He is also thankful to Dr. N. K. Sahu, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Sambalpur University for his kind encouragement and valuable advice. He is thankful to the authorities of Midnapur branch of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and the Jhargram Library and the rich collectorate Library at Midnapur and he would particularly acknowledge his debts to Messrs Sudhamoy Bandyopadhaya and Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhaya for their invaluable assistance to the author. Manuscript records of the period were studied in the State Archives of West Bengal, in the Midnapur Collectorate Record Room and in the National Archives, New Delhi. Most of the records of the Burdwan Committee of Revenue were found in the Midnapur Collectorate Record Room and the letters referred to in the foot-notes had no page-marks and no volume number also could be given. The author would seek excuses from the reading scholars for this limitation. Relevant parliamentary papers, printed reports and Despatches were studied in the National Library, Calcutta. He must record his grateful thanks to the librarians and Archivists of those institutions and he would always cherish the sweet memory of their ungrudging assistance to the author. He is also grateful to the University Grants Commission for awarding him liberal financial grants to complete this work and he would also acknowledge his debts to Prof. P. N. Ghosh and Dr. Sunil Chaudhuri, formerly Principals of Midnapur College under whom the author had the privilege of serving the institution for about two decades with uninterrupted happiness. To Sri Sankar Bhattacharya,



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26th January, 1973  
Sambalpur University

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BINOD SANKAR DAS

## *Chapter I*

### **TOPOGRAPHY AND THE EARLY ACCOUNTS**

Three events in particular deserve special mention in the early history of British rule in Midnapur and outlying tracts of the Jungle Mahals. First, on 27 September, 1760, by way of paying off the outstanding dues Mir Qasim agreed to assign revenues of three chaklas of Midnapur, Burdwan and Chittagong to the East India Company.<sup>1</sup> The Treaty contained the express injunction that "they shall continue the zamindars and renters in their places."<sup>2</sup> The string attached to the treaty makes it clear that the transfer of territories was not accompanied by any large-scale confiscation of properties of the existing zamindars. The second significant event was the securing of an Imperial Farman on 12 August, 1765, by Clive that made the Company the Diwan of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.<sup>3</sup> Both in the capacity of the Zamindar of Midnapur and Burdwan as well as the Diwan of Bengal the Company proceeded to rule this region. Lastly, the acquisitions of the parganas of Patashpur, Kamardachaur, Bhograi and other salt producing tracts resulting from the surrender of Orissa to the Company after the defeat of the Bhonsle power in 1803 marked the completion of the British conquest of the area.<sup>4</sup>

1. Aitchison, C. U., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sunnuds relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. 1, Calcutta 1892, pp. 215-217 ; Vansittart, H., *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal, 1760-64*, Vol. 1, pp. 101-2.

2. Boughton Rous, *Dissertation Concerning the Landed Properties of Bengal*, London, M. Dec, XCI, p. 100.

3. Verelst, Harry, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, pp. 225-226 ; Appendix I ; Select Committee letter to the Directors, September 30, 1765.

4. Aitchison, *op.cit.*, I, p. 415.

*Change in jurisdiction of districts*

The period from 1760 to 1805 i.e., the earliest epoch of the British administration in this area was characterised by absence of any clear-cut frontier line. Mainly as experimental measures in the field of administration several changes were introduced in the jurisdiction of the districts in 1772 when the East India Company at last decided to stand forth publicly in the character of Diwan. A Committee of Revenue consisting of the whole Council of the Governor-General was placed in charge of the Revenue Department. From the correspondence of the Committee of Revenue (13th October, 1772 to 23 November, 1773) it is evident that altogether thirteen collectorships were created. Hooghly was one of such thirteen collectorships which included the salt tracts of Tamlook Mahisadal and Hijli.<sup>5</sup> Later on these salt tracts were separated and annexed to Huzur Taluk by an order of 16 March, 1773. In this period Birbhum including Panchet and Bishnupur was made another collectorship. It appears that a year after, separate Collectors were appointed for Panchet and Bishnupur by an order of 19 January, 1773 but this arrangement was cancelled on 28 May, 1773. Two other collectorships created during the period ranging from 1772-1773, Burdwan and Midnapur including Jaleswar, were placed under Residents.

The farming settlements made by the Committee of Revenue, and the appointment of the "Collectors" did not prove satisfactory from the point of view of revenue collections. On 23 November, 1773, the Council in accordance with the instructions of the Hon'ble Court of Directors recalled the European Collectors. One Indian Officer, named as the Diwan or Amil, was appointed for each district except such as had been leased entirely to the Zamindars or farmers. They were placed under the Provincial Councils of Revenue. Among five provincial Councils of Revenue formed in November, 1773, the Calcutta Committee included Hooghly, Hijli, Mahisadal and Tamlook.

5. Regulations passed on May 14, 1772, paras 6, 7.

The Burdwan Committee consisted of Burdwan, Midnapur, Bishnupur, Panchet, Birbhum and Ramgarh. It is thus apparent that by the end of 1773 Bengal had been divided into twenty-eight districts, some named after Zamindars, and big units like Midnapur and Burdwan were often termed provinces. This system of revenue administration continued for more than seven years. In 1780 both the districts of Hijli and Tamlook were converted into salt agencies under Calvert and Archdekin respectively.<sup>6</sup> On 20 February, 1781, the Governor General-in-Council decided to replace five Provincial Councils of Revenue by one Committee of Revenue consisting of four covenanted servants of the Company. From December 1784 to February, 1785 the Collectorship of Panchet and the Residency of Balasore were abolished.<sup>7</sup>

In 1786 the Committee was replaced by the Board of Revenue. In 1787 fourteen Collectorships were created out of the existing arrangements in Bengal. Bogri was annexed to Burdwan, Jaleswar to Midnapur, Birbhum and Bishnupur were reunited. These modifications within the fourteen newly created collectorships were notified in the Calcutta Gazette, of Thursday, 29 March, 1787.<sup>8</sup> At the time of the Decennial Settlement of 10 February, 1790, two large fiscal divisions of Tamlook and Mahisadal were taken away from Hooghly and were transferred to Midnapur but Hijli remained a separate Collectorate till upto 1836.<sup>9</sup> Then it was annexed to Midnapur with the exception of the fiscal divisions of Bhograi, Kamar-dachaur and Shahbandar, which formed a part of it and which

6. W. Hastings to Peiarce, Collector of Midnapore, Fort William, September 29, 1780 ; Price, J. C., *Notes on the History of Midnapur*, Calcutta, 1876, p. 33.

7. Minutes, 20 December, 1784 and 27 January 1785 in the Progs. of the G.G. in C(Revenue), 16 February, 1785 (No. 13).

8. Seton-Karr, W. S., *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes, 1784-88*, Vol. I, pp. 185-6.

9. Hunter, W. W., *Statistical Accounts of Bengal*, Vol 3, London, 1875-77, p. 21.

were transferred to the Orissa district of Balasore. Hijli has ever since remained a portion of Midnapur. In 1852 H. V. Bayley, Collector of Midnapur in his Memorandum recommended Hijli's separation from Midnapur. He also proposed that the Salt Agent of Hijli should be appointed Collector and Magistrate. The proposition however, did not materialise owing to the abolition of the Government's salt monopoly.<sup>10</sup>

In 1793 six Jungle Mahals of Raypur, Shyamsundarpur, Khursal, Phulkusuma, Simlapal and Bhaliadihi were transferred to Midnapur from Burdwan on grounds of administrative efficiency.<sup>11</sup> But by the Regulation XXXVI of 1795 Hooghly was separated from Burdwan including Howrah. During the same year, a former arrangement was again reversed for administrative convenience. Thus some portion of Pargana Bogri, namely, thana Garhbeta was transferred from Burdwan to Midnapur. In 1799 owing to "the contumacy of the old Zamindars and the raids of Chuars" (1795-98) Panchet and Jhalda were transferred\* from Ramgarh district to Birbhum.<sup>12</sup> In 1800 pargana Brahmanbhum and portion of pargana Chitua, taraf Daspur on the right bank of the Rupnarayan were transferred from Hooghly to the district of Midnapur "to relieve the pressure of work" of Hooghly.<sup>13</sup> In 1801 the revenue administration of the rest of the pargana Bogri was transferred from Burdwan to Midnapur due to revenue convenience by the order of 26 February, 1801. This process of consolidation was completed when in 1803 three parganas of Patashpur, Bhograi, Kamardachaur under the Maratha occupation were attached to Midnapur Magistracy after the Treaty of Deogaon with the Bhonsle Raja of Nagpur.

Eventually in 1805 for the first time a new district named the Jungle Mahals was created by Regulation XVIII due to

10. Hunter, *Ibid*, p. 22.

11. Governor-General's order, 27 September, 1793.

12. *Ibid*, Orders, 10 October, 1799 and 31 October, 1799.

13. *Ibid*, Order dated 27 November, 1800.

“violent disturbances in the area and the raids of the Chuars on settled tracts”. This new district consisted of pargana Senpahari, Sergarh, Bishnupur (except thana Katalpur) and Pargana Balsye were taken from Burdwan. Ten jungle mahals including Paanchet, Bagmundy, Jhalda, Jharia and Patkum were similarly transferred from Birbhum while seven other jungle mahals of Chatna, Barabhum, Manbhum, Sripur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal, Bhaliadihi were also transferred from Midnapur to the new district. In 1806 the three Maratha Parganas of Midnapore were annexed to Hijli Salt Agency for administrative convenience. But this Jungle Mahal district was again finally broken by Regulation XIII of 1833.

All these changes in the jurisdiction of the district and the adjoining areas taking place within forty years illustrate the point that no rigid policy either on the administrative or on political side could be evolved during this period. In view of this fact it would be futile to enquire whether geography or topography of the region supplied any feature of unity to this south-west frontier of Bengal.

### *Natural divisions*

On a close examination it appears that this area falls into three natural divisions. In the north and north-west it embraces a portion of the eastern fringe of the Chhotanagpur plateau, and consists of a hard laterite formation. The dense sal forests that cover the plains offered the defenders of these mahals opportunities of carrying on guerilla war, and the hills afforded them inaccessible places of refuge. The south-eastern portion of the Midnapore district, i.e., Nimki Mahals has been formed out of the alluvial deposits borne down by the Hooghly, and its tributaries. The agricultural products in this area attracted the British authorities to settle lands on favourable terms. On the south-west and south, the country which geographically belonged to Orissa, is a maritime tract subject to

tidal waves. This area became also large salt producing region. Naturally the economic system and relationships in this area differed qualitatively from those of the first or second divisions.

### *Geological features*

These features explain the geological formation of this region. The characteristic formation of the mahals is laterite. It occupies nearly the whole country in the north and west but in the south and east gradually gives way to the alluvium of the gangetic delta.

In Midnapore in its alluvial tract, clay soil is known as ethel, loam and sandy loam. In the laterite tract the soils are mostly loam and sandy loam but their colour is reddish brown. They are inferior in fertility to the corresponding types of soil in the alluvial tract. The name of the tracts, Rādha, some scholars think, comes from the reddish colour of the soil.

### *River system*

The river system in Midnapore and the Jungle Mahals provided in the 18th century an easy means of communication and internal trade as well as a great incentive to agricultural productions. The obligations of the Zamindars were to construct embankments and canals and to provide for large-scale irrigation of the soil (Takavi). In absence of adequate roads in the wild regions the rivers provided an important means of defence. The river Hooghly nowhere intersects Midnapore but flows along its eastern boundary. Its tributary the Rupanarayan receives water from the Silai and the Darkeswar rivers. The principal tributary of Haldi is the Kasai which enters Midnapore in the north-west from Bankura. Two other tributaries of the Haldi are the Kaliaghai and the Kapaleswari. The Subarnarekha is the only other river of Jungle Mahals and Midnapore area which deserves mention. It enters the district of Jungle Mahals on the north-west and passes through

the south-west of the Jhargram subdivision intersecting the Gopiballavpur thana. From the south of Dantan it enters the Balasore district and finally falls into the Bay of Bengal. Within historic times great changes have taken place in the course of some of the rivers and especially in the lower portion of the Rupnarayan ; and due to gradual silting of these rivers some of them are no longer navigable.

In some of these rivers embankments were constructed for the irrigation of the soil. In 1802 a Superintendent of Embankments was appointed and repairs were carried out by the corrupted Poolbundy darogahs. After a prolonged correspondence with the Board of Revenue the control of embankments was taken over by the Collector in 1803. Under the Embankment Regulation of 1806, Committees were formed with powers to call upon Zamindars to carry out the repairs of their embankments. In 1829 the inefficiency and corruptions in the department led to the replacement of the Embankments Committees by the Military Board.<sup>14</sup> The results were :

- 1) security of the ryots from droughts or floods,
- 2) With the control of the floods these embankments also obstructed the drainage of the country leading to spread of tropical diseases.<sup>15</sup>

Besides rivers and canals excellent highways provide another means of communication for not only easy movement of army from Orissa to Bengal and Bihar but also for convenient transport of merchandise. The road system in an inaccessible region stimulated transportation of salt in the Jungle Mahals to a great extent. The well-known road that connected Bengal with Cuttack ran through this region. Raja Man Singh in his Orissa campaign in 1591-92, Khan-i-Dauran in his campaign in 1660-63, T. Motte appointed by Clive to discover gold mines in Shambalpur in 1766, and Elliot and Leckie, British ambassa-

14. Irrigation Manual, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1926, N. 45, pp. 143-144.

15. Ibid, Vol. I, p. 197.



dors proceeding towards Nagpur through Cuttack in 1778 and 1790 respectively followed this route. But the Marathas did not probably follow one particular route from Nagpur to Bengal via Orissa. As regards Bhaskar Pant's march from Cuttack to Panchet it appears that he selected the direct route through the hill tracts of eastern Keonjhar and western Mayurbhanj, Singbhum and Manbhum districts as Badshahi road was followed by Alivardi Khan on his way back to Murshidabad from Cuttack.<sup>16</sup> The necessity of establishing postal communications from Bengal to Nagpur via the Jungle Mahals and Mayurbhanj impelled the Company's authorities in the 70's of the 18th century to seek advice from the Bhonsle Raja.<sup>17</sup> In order to ease the difficulties of travelling and transport of commodities over the nālās and rivers bridges were also constructed. T. Motte on his journey to Shambalpur in 1766 found a bridge of 120 yards long and 10 yards broad over the Kānsāi river.<sup>18</sup>

Nature of the soil and climate greatly shaped the system of work of its inhabitants. The population of this region is popularly divided into two groups :

- (1) Hātua, those who buy and sell in the markets or the upper stratum of the community, and
- (2) Kalāpithia, the blacks or aboriginal tribes. Again, the Kalāpithia group of people consisted of two classes ; the Khandaits or swordsmen who formed the backbone of the paiks and the Chuars or aboriginal levies.

The poor yields of the soil bred gang robbery and a spirit of independence among the people which was unknown in other parts of Bengal. Even the Zamindars supported the acts of robbery and pillage.

16. Indian Historical Record Commission, 24th session, Jaipur, 1948, p. 117.

17. Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol. V, No. 1398.

18. Early European Travellers in Nagpur Territories, Nagpur, 1904, p. 8.

*Politico-economic importance of the region*

With these varied natural phenomena this region from the remote past had a politico-economic importance not only to the inhabitants of the soil but to its successive Hindu, Muslim and British rulers. First, this area was never thoroughly subdued by the rulers of Bengal and Orissa. These jungle chiefs are variously described as "rebellious free-booters" and their subjects as "chuars.....bred up as much for pillaging as cultivating. They paid quit-rents ; sometimes they did not pay at all".<sup>19</sup> From the remote past the central authority at the nizamat left their privileges untouched in this inaccessible region. Moreover, this region supplied valiant warriors to the military department of the rulers of Bengal. The Jungle chiefs were the "wardens of the marches" for which they maintained trained militia of paiks and chuars or aboriginal levies and enjoyed the usufruct for generations of non-revenue paying ghatwali and chakran lands. Second, this region also had a strategic value. It extended upto the borders of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Important trade routes traverse this area through which the rulers could easily send army towards the Deccan or Maharastra. The possession of this region was thought necessary by the authorities to make it a buffer state against any possible Maratha aggression from Orissa. Third, the economic value of this region is also undeniable. Originally, it was ceded to the Company to defray their military expenses by Mir Qasim as was previously mentioned. It covers a large rice and salt producing area and contains forests with valuable trees like piasal and sal. The Indian merchants Transported secretly salt through the trade-routes along this region and the authorities had to make elaborate arrangements for checking their illicit trade by establishing check-posts.

19. Firminger, W. K., Introduction to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the East India Company, 1812, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1917, pc. XXVIII-IX.

*Problems of defining its limits*

Important though this area was, difficulty was experienced in defining the exact limits of these salt and forest tracts. In the early British period the actual extent of the country was determined only after a long arduous struggle of about forty years, because this problem of defining the actual limits of the tracts often led to clash of arms with the Marathas of Orissa and Rajas of the soil. The description given by Ed. Baber, the Resident of Midnapore to W. Hastings in 1773 in a letter is to some extent satisfactory.

“The western jungle is an extent of country about eight miles in breadth and sixty in length. On the east it is bounded by Midnapore, on the west by Singhbhum, on the north by Panchet and on the south by Mayurbhanj..... It has always been annexed to the province of Midnapore.....”<sup>20</sup>

Again in 1781 some of the jungle Zamindars, in describing their country in general wrote a letter which generally agrees with the sketch of 1773 drawn by Ed. Baber.<sup>21</sup>

*Homogeneity of the ‘Bhum’ countries*

But these records do by no means offer a clear picture of the Jungle Mahals on two considerations. First, the local history of the region would make it clear that Mayurbhanj, Panchet, Singhbhum and other “Bhum” ending tracts were not outside but were in the past always included within the Jungle Mahals. Second, the Jungle Mahals were neither a part of Midnapore before the British period nor were totally administered from Midnapore by the Hindu and Muslim rulers successively. Though Ed. Baber had expressed the idea that the Jungle Mahals belonged to Midnapore, there were various difficult situations

20. From Ed. Baber, to the Hon’ble W. Hastings, Midnapore, 6 February, 1773; Firminger, W. K., (Ed.) Bengal District Records, Midnapur, Vol. IV, 1770-74, No. 163.

21. Price, J. C., Notes on the History of Midnapur, p. 32.

regarding the position of each and every unit of the region, its relations and affiliations, its fiscal connections with Midnapore not to speak of the size, dimensions and backgrounds of each of these different units which constituted the Jungle Mahals. The problem was, therefore, one of vast complexities and the British officials had to proceed very cautiously with each of the chiefs to negotiate terms of settlement. Even in their own rank there was much confusion about the identity and position of the mahals. Fergusson was deputed in March 1767, to make a settlement with the Zamindar of Chhatna believing the Zamindary a part of the jungle mahals whereas Capt. Upton was deputed from Burdwan to make a settlement with the same Zamindar under the impression that Chhatna lay within the jurisdiction of Burdwan. This is an instance to show that the British records are not quite clear regarding the exact territorial limits of the jungle mahals.<sup>22</sup>

As it has been already noted, the Jungle Mahals were not perhaps easy to define at any rate, the topographical position was not correctly estimated even in the modern Gazetteer literature of the area. The lines of the old District Gazetteer of Bankura run thus<sup>23</sup> :

“The name jungle mahals is a vague term. It was applied in the 18th century to the British possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chhotanagpur. As the system of Government was not clear, inconvenience was occasioned by the vagueness of the jurisdiction in these territories.”

#### *Ancient ethnological divisions*

These lines illustrate the difficulty which was encountered

22. Fergusson to Graham, Midnapore, 12 March, 1767 ; also dated Balarampur thana, 14 March, 1767.

23. O'Malley, L. S. S., Bengal District Gazetteers, Bankura, 1911, pp. 38-39.

in defining the territorial limits of Midnapore and the Jungle Mahals in the early British period. Moreover, the historians are not unanimous in identifying the exact ancient names of the region or defining its ancient frontiers. Some historians are inclined to regard Rādḥa as the ancient name of the Jufgle Mahals and Midnapore. The term 'Rādḥa' was known from ancient times. In the Jaina Acharanga Sutta (6th century B.C.), ranking among the oldest scriptures, the country of the Lādḥas was divided into Vajjabhumi and Subbabhumi. The references in classical literature and in some inscriptions show that Rādḥa reasonably identified by M. M. Chakravorty with Lādḥa of Acharanga Sutta, had by the 11th and 12th centuries been applied to an extensive country which was divided into two tracts, north and south.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the contention of M. M. Chakravorty is confirmed by the accounts given in the Tabakat-i-Nasiri.<sup>25</sup> The 'Rāl' of this writer evidently refers to northern Rādḥa. The Rādḥa, north and south, according to Chakravorty, comprises roughly Sarkar Mandaran, Sharifabad, E. Sulaimanabad, N. Satgaon and Lakhanawati of Todar Mall's Rent-Roll. The 'Lādḥas', according to others, were the hill tribes of Dhalbhum, Singhbhum, Mayurbhanj and Bamra. Therefore, some portions at least of ancient Rādḥa may be located in the district of Midnapur as understood by the Company.

Then again, according to M. M. Chakravorty Vajjabhumi so geographically described is the rough jungly part on the west. Nandalal De equates it with Vajjabhumi and identifies the latter with the modern districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum.<sup>26</sup> Dr. B. C. Sen thinks that it was a synonym for

24. Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1926, Vol. XXII ; M. M. Chakravorty, Geography of Bengal.

25. Major Raverty, pp. 584-6, Quoted in J.A.S.B. 1926.

26. Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, Vol IV, 1928 ; Nandalal De, Rādḥa or the Ancient Garga Rastra, pp. 44-45.

Virabhumī or Virbhum.<sup>27</sup> Dr. H. C. Roy Choudhury connects it with Sarkar Mandaran in south-west of Bengal mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* which was equivalent to parts of the modern Birbhum, Burdwan and Hooghly districts. This was because there was a diamond-mine or "Bajra-Bhumi" in that region.<sup>28</sup> P. Acharya says that Vajjabhumī is the same as Bhanjabhumī and identified the place with Mayurbhanj.<sup>29</sup> Mayurbhanj can be equated on the strength of archæological data with Bhajjabhumī of the *Acharang-Sutta*. The Jamdapur copper-plate and other epigraphic records corroborate the view that Vanjabhumī-Baripada or ancient name of Mayurbhanj was then in existence.

According to Jaina Kalpa Sutra Subbabhumī is said to have been visited by Mahavira. Its other references in classical literature suggest to Dr. S. B. Choudhuri that Suhma corresponded to a littoral portion of Bengal, possibly the modern Midnapore district, having had an extensive sea-board which made Tamluk a trading port of considerable importance.<sup>30</sup> The natural presumption is that Suhma was a part of Rādha in very early times, perhaps only its southern portion and corresponded to the modern districts of Howrah and Midnapore.

But the position of Rādha had to be related to the situation of a well-known administrative unit of Bengal, namely, the Vardamanabhukti as mentioned in the *Irda* inscription and also in the *Ramcharita* of Sandhyakar Nandi. Out of its four mahals the Danda-Bhukti mandala is referred to in the two

27. Sen, B. C., *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, pp. 49-55 ; Quoted in Chaudhuri, S. B., *Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 159.

28. Majumdar, R. C., (Ed.) *The History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, Decca, 1943, p. 9.

29. *Indian Culture*, 1945-46, Vol XII.

30. Chaudhuri, S. B., *Ethnic Settlement in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 159.

above-mentioned sources. It is doubtless identical with Tanda-butti "in whose gardens bees abounded" referred to in the Chola inscriptions of 1025-26 A.D.<sup>31</sup> Dandabhukti has been indentified by scholars with the marchlands between Orissa and Bengal corresponding to the southern and south-western part of the Midnapore District. The name is said to survive in modern Danton not far from the Subarnarekha. But this reference to Danton derived from Danda-Bhukti is not corroborated by other epigraphic sources and tradition subsisting in that region.<sup>32</sup>

In the classical literature another important name is often found, i.e. Pundra. In some medieval works, the name Pundra-desa is employed as the designation of practically the whole of Eastern India. So geographically it carries no meaning. Prof. Wilson and Dr. Burgess wrote that the Brahmananda section of the Bhabisyat (Bh) Purāṇa divides Puṇḍra-deśa into Gour, Varendra, Nivritti, Suhma, Nārikhanda, Barahabhumī, Bardhamana and Bindyaparsva.<sup>33</sup> They identified Jharkhand province with Narikhanda. In the early British records this Jharkhand had included Duar-shorbhum and large portions of Bankura, Singhbhum and Manbhum. Therefore, from the geographical point of view it is easy to conclude that the Jungle Mahals surely included portions of ancient Pundra, Suhma and Radha, the exact location of which was not possible now to ascertain.

In Midnapore district besides the forest tracts Tamluk is a subdivision, which was a salt tract. Its ancient name Tamralipti under various forms, appears in works of the epic period. The present Zamindar of Tamluk claims to be a descendant of Kalu Raya, a Kaivarta chief who might have got the Zamin-dari after Todar Mall's Rent-Roll was prepared. It appears as a mahal of Sarkar Jaleswar in Todar Mall's Rent-Roll.<sup>34</sup>

31. Majumder, R. C., (Ed.) *The History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

32. Basu, Jogesh Chandra, *Medinipurer Itihas (In Bengali)*, p. 108.

33. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol XX, 1891, pp. 418-21.

34. Abul Fazl Allami, *The Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 2, Col. H. S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1891, p. 142.

The Portuguese appear to have occupied it for sometime-and it formed a base for their piracy. In the Perfect Rent-Roll of Murshid Quli it was included as a Zamindari. It was a Nimki Mahal and in the early British Records it was mentioned with Hijli as within the chakla of Midnapore, though, of course, there is no evidence to show that the Midnapore authorities had any jurisdiction in or before 1772 over Tamluk.<sup>35</sup>

That some portions of the Jungle Mahals were included within Orissa was held by some modern scholars including J. C. Price.<sup>36</sup> From the old records it is evident that as early as 1764 the Company's Government extended its jurisdiction over the chaklas of Jaleswar and Hijli including Midnapore.<sup>37</sup> The early Revenue Officers of the Company admitted the influence of Orissa in Midnapore and the Jungle Mahals.<sup>38</sup> Other records seem to indicate that Balasore which is now under Orissa and Midnapore chaklas was the old location of the Jungle Mahals.<sup>39</sup> According to the Census Report, 1951, the parganas situated in the west and north-west of Midnapore, now evidently in Orissa, were included in the Jungle Mahals. Price on the authority of old records also opines that the Company's revenue jurisdiction included the parganas most of which belonged to the Midnapore Zamindari of Rani Shiromani.<sup>40</sup> As late as 1872-73 it was reported that in the last century Orissa included the territories between the rivers Rupnarayan and the Subarnarekha.<sup>41</sup> But it is difficult to agree with the view that all the forest and salt tracts were included within Orissa in the ancient and medieval periods. The fact is that the geographical position of ancient Orissa

35. Price, J. C., Notes etc., pp. 26-34.

36. Ibid, pp. 26-34.

37. Ibid, pp. 26.

38. Graham to Clive, September 27, 1766.

39. Das, Narendranath, History of Midnapur, Vol. 1, 1956, pp. 1-2.

40. From the Resident to Richard Becher Esq., Collector-General, dated, Midnapore, 30 December 1767.

41. Bengal Administrative Report (1872-73), p. 40.



needs no scrutiny in the context of the Jungle Mahals. Various opinions are hazarded regarding the location of ancient Orissa but it is generally agreed that the country starting from the south-east of Midnapore running up to Ganjam along the sea-coast generally corresponded to the description of ancient Odra, Utkala or Kalinga country.<sup>42</sup> According to Dr. S. B. Choudhuri both the Utkala and Kalingas belonged to one and the same race ('Kol' is common). In this situation it is a natural presumption that the Jungle Mahals had intimate relations of political, administrative and social nature with ancient Orissa.

#### *Topographical features in Madla Panji*

Moreover, the details of topographical features given in the Mādālā Pānji (the chronicles of the Jagannath Temple at Puri) which may not be regarded as very authentic on all points have, however, a bearing on the subject.<sup>43</sup> It appears from the Mādālā Pānji that Orissa was divided into 31 Dandapatas and 110 Bishis. Among them six Dandapatas were included within the district of Midnapore. (1) Tania, (2) Jauliti, (3) Narayanpur, (4) Naigaon, (5) Maljhita and (6) Bhanjabhum-Baripada. It may, however, be noted that king Anangabhimdeva of Orissa collected revenues as far north as the Kansai which suggests incorporation of some areas of the mahals within Orissa.

The topographical application of these names may be discussed in connexion with the relevant areas as contained in the Ain-i-Akbari. The Ain of Abul Fazl, regarded by scholars as an authentic account of the Mughal period, gives a list of the imperial dominions as existed in the reign of Akbar.

42. I.H.Q., Vol. 5, 1929, pp. 661-664. Thornton, Edward, A Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of East India Company and of the Native States on the Continent of India, London, 1862, p. 324.

43. Mohanty, A. B., (Ed.), Madla Panji, J.A.S.B., 1916.

In spite of changes in the fiscal divisions of Orissa and Bengal during subsequent Mughal rule, the mahals, though increased in number, radically remained unchanged. So in checking and identifying the Ain's list considerable help could be obtained from James Grant's Analysis of the Fifth Report. In the Muslim period, Sarkars of Orissa had changed hands for a considerable number of time. But the first change in Todar Mal's Rent-Roll (1582) was introduced in 1658 during the viceroyalty of the Prince Muhammed Shuja (1639-59). Orissa, so long administered by a separate Governor generally appointed from Delhi, was now added to the Prince's viceroyalty of Bengal.<sup>44</sup> Out of the twelve Sarkars the northernmost six were dismembered from Orissa and annexed to Bengal such as Remna, Basta, Jaleswar, Maljitha, Goalpara and Mazkurin. A new Sarkar Peshkash was formed including the Zamindaris of Bishnupur, Chandrakona, Barda and Panchakota.<sup>45</sup> It was held that this new Sarkar Peshkash was based on the loyalty of the Zamindars who paid a quit-rent or, peshkash and recognised nominal suzerainty of the Mughal Government.

The next great change was introduced in the Perfect Rent Roll (Jamma Kameil Tummary) of Murshid Quli Khan (1711-1727). He changed the general name, mahal into parganas. For the khalsa portion he added an administrative division higher than Sarkars i.e., chaklas.<sup>46</sup> The northern Sarkars which had been annexed to Bengal in the time of Shah Shuja were placed under two Chaklas : Bandar Balasore (17 parganas) and Hijli (35 parganas) besides the Zamindari of Tamluk comprising one hundred and four parganas.<sup>47</sup>

44. James Grant's Analysis of the Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the East India Company, Ed. by Firminger, W. R., 1812, Vol. 2, pp. 182-183.

45. Grant's Analysis, Vol. 2, pp. 182-184 ; Ascoli, F. D., Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report, 1812, Oxford, 1917, pp. 21-29.

46. Ibid, pp. 188-189 ; Ascoli, F. D., Early Revenue History etc., p. 25.

47. Grant's Analysis, Ibid, p. 189.

The corrected rent-roll of Nawab Shuja-ud-din-Muhammad Khan was prepared in 1728. The southern half of the dismembered portion with the port of Balasore, Soro, Remna, Basta and Jaleswar was reannexed to Orissa for administrative purpose but kept in Bengal for revenue purposes. In 1728 Chandra-kona and Barda parganas of Sarkar peshkash and pargana Chitua of Sarkar Mandaran were included within the Chakla of Burdwan.<sup>48</sup>

Lastly, in 1751 Alivardi Khan tired of fighting with the Marathas appointed a new Deputy Governor (Mir Habib) for Orissa. The river Subarnarekha (wrongly referred to as Sonāmakia by Ghulam Husain) near Jaleswar was fixed as the boundary of Bengal subah which excluded parganas of Patashpur, Kamardachar etc. beyond the river. In the ceded portion of Orissa 12 parganas from Bengal besides Patashpur were included. From this review of the history of this region one can safely conclude that during the Mughal period Sarkar Jaleswar had considerably changed hands.<sup>49</sup> In the Ain this Jaleswar Sarkar was divided into twenty-eight mahals, the names of which were difficult to identify. Blochmann<sup>50</sup>, John Beams<sup>51</sup> and M. M. Chakravorty attempted to locate the mahals but their discussions became controversial. It seems hazardous at this stage of our knowledge to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the location of the parganas. But following the trend of their discussions it is clear that some of the mahals were regarded as part of Jungle Mahals, some belonged to Orissa and the position of the rest was uncertain.

Both Beams and Blochmann agree in placing (1) Bansanda

48. Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 366, 410-11, 365-66.

49. Chakravorty, M. M., Notes on the Geography of Orissa, J.A.S.B., 1916.

50. Blochmann, H., Contributions to Geography and History of Bengal, J.A.S.B., 1873, pp. 209-310 ; 1874, p. 280 ; 1875, p. 275.

51. Notes on Akbar's subas, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, 1896, pp. 83-136. Also quoted by M. M. Chakravorty in Notes on Geography of Orissa, J.A.S.B., 1916.

or Bansad urf Haft-chor (with five forts), (2) Bibli or Pipli Shah Bandar, (3) Bal Koshi with three forts, (4) Bazar or Dhenkia Bazar, (5) Talia with Kasba Jaleswar, (6) Tarkol, (7) Remna with five forts in the Haveli, (8) Rayan, on the borders of Orissa with three forts, (9) Karai within the borders of Orissa. Remna and Jaleswar are mentioned in the Diary of Govinda Das as visited by Chaitanyadev during his pilgrimage to the south in 1509-10. But there are other parganas which may safely be included within the present Midnapore district i.e. (1) Balishahi, (2) Bhograi belong to thana Ramnagar, subdivision Contai of District Midnapore, (3) Bugdi or Bogri belonged to thana Garhbeta of Midnapore Sadar Subdivision, once ruled by the Rajas of Chandrakona but later on succeeded by the Mall Rajas of Bishnupur. By the usual Malguzary operations Raja Kirtti Chandra of Burdwan took forcible possession of the pargana securing a dewany sanad in 1728 from the Nawab Shuja-ud-din-Muhammad Khan<sup>52</sup>, (4) Tambulak is identified by the scholars as Tamluk and Tamralipta of ancient times, (5) Sabang, (6) Siara belonged to Midnapore district, (7) Kasijora often finds mention in the early British revenue records which was originally a part of the Zamindari of Rani Shiromani<sup>53</sup>, (8) Kharaksur was identified with the Railway junction of Khargpur, and (9) Kedarkund and (10) Gagnapur or Gagneswar as parts of the Kasijora Zamindari, (11) According to M. M. Chakravorty<sup>54</sup> Karul Chaura or Karohi or Karauli lies partly in thana Dantan and partly in thana Egra of Midnapore district, (12) Malchchata or Maljekta belonged to the foudari of Hijli and finds mention in Chaitanya Charitamrita<sup>55</sup>, (13)

52. Grant-Analysis etc , pp. 477-78.

53. Firminger: Introduction to the Fifth Report etc., pp. CXXVI-VII.

54. M. M. Chakravorty, Op.cit., J.A.S.B., 1916.

55. Krishnadasa Kabiraj, Chaitanya Charitamrita—Antya Khanda, Navam Parichched, Calcutta, 1368.

Medinipur is the District town and according to Karcha of Govinda Dasa Chaitanya visited Midnapore in 1509 on his way to Puri. In fact, it was the gateway to Orissa.<sup>56</sup> (14) Mahakalghat urf Kutabpur is placed by Chakravorty within Debra and Panskura and (15) Narainpur urf Kandhar with a fort on a hill is identified as Naraingarh Zamindari which was visited by Chaitanyadeva coming from Midnapore according to Govinda Dasa. One of its rulers Gandharvapala got the title of Sri Chandan from the Orissan King (1264) and another ruler got the title of Mādi Sultan (Warden of the roads) from Shah Jahan some times after 1624.

Thus it is evident that some of the above-mentioned mahals are situated distinctly within Orissa and most of them are now in the district of Midnapore. Therefore it is difficult to accept the view that Jaleswar Sarkar was originally regarded as the Jungle Mahals.<sup>57</sup> Among the twenty-eight mahals there are at least three mahals which had the suffix-‘Bhum’ in their names : Babbanbhum, Dūar Shorbhum and the other was Baripada, a mahal in the Mayurbhanj, otherwise called Bhanjabhum. These mahals are, no doubt, within the Jungle Mahals, but these political units attract one’s attention as a special feature of the region.

#### *Origin of the Bhum countries*

It is admitted that the ancient tradition of naming countries after the family surname of the rulers survived in the kingdoms of the Jungle Mahals with Bhum suffix.<sup>58</sup> Evidence is not wanting that the countries were so-called after the names of tribes or families or even brothers belonging to a family long after the tribe or family had ceased to exist. According to

56. Thornton, Gazetteer etc., p. 617.

57. Das, Narendra Nath, Op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

58 P. Acharya, Indian Culture, Vol. XII, pp. 945-46.

N. L. De some of the countries with 'Bhum' suffix derived their names from Mahavira of the Jainas.<sup>59</sup> No doubt, the Jaina influence in these regions was extensive. But the theory that all the names of the Bhum countries are derived from different names of Mahavira is untenable.

The epigraphic evidences as regards the origin of some of the tracts with 'Bhum' suffix goes back to a much earlier period than the 15th century as stated in the old District Gazetteer of Bankura.<sup>60</sup> The assertion may be illustrated if the earliest history of Bhanjabhum-Baripada of the Jaleswar Chakla is traced. Blochmann is inclined to regard the Bhum-ending territories as a single block of land. His argument is not without truth. The antiquity of the Bhum countries goes back to the period of the ancient Jaina literature; Subbabhumi and Bhajjabhumi, the two countries mentioned in the Acharang Sutta might have been an appellation for the entire country covered by forest tracts abutting on the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. During the Pala period the appearance of other territorial names ending in 'Bhum' suffix suggest the fragmentation of the original Bhum countries into different units each of which perhaps was owned by a variety of local chiefs. At a later period represented by the rise of Vaisnavism, various literary sources dealing chiefly with the cult of popular Vaisnavism indicate that two powerful 'Bhum' countries, namely Mallabhum and Bhanjabhum had emerged into considerable political eminence and dominated the scene of that area. It may be inferred that an element of rivalry in the cultural field if not in the battle field was introduced between these two powerful units which might have tended towards a polarisation of powers. New and small units like Tungabhum, Singhbhum, Brahmanbhum, Adityabhum etc. were absorbed into the one or the other, leading to the extension of power of the two powerful and principal Bhum countries

59. I.H.Q., Vol. IV, p. 45.

60. O'Malley, L. S. S., Bengal District Gazetteers, Bankura, p. 22.

and this transformation of the situation seems to have taken place at the time of the survey and settlements of the Mughal period. The Ain refers to different parganas of the Jaleswar Sarkar three of which were Bhanjabhum, Brahmanbhum and Duarshorbhum. The above Bhum countries were not described in detail but it is obvious that other well known 'Bhum's' in existence were either incorporated into the one or the other parganas of the Jaleswar Sarkar or were maintaining an independent existence in other Sarkars of Bengal. Thus from James Grant's Analysis it is evident that Murshid Quli came to terms with the Rajas of Birbhum, Mallabhum and Panchet. There is no mention of other numerous small forest and salt tracts could be traced. This suggests that they were possibly swallowed by one or other of the large forest tracts like Mallabhum, Birbhum, Bhanjabhum, or Panchet. As for the inclusion of certain areas of Mayurbhanj or Bhanjabhum like Kuchang, Amarda, Nayabasan within the jungle mahals by the British Company's Government it may be added that there was some dispute regarding the ownership of these areas between the British and the Marathas and the liquidation of the rule of the latter correspondingly implied ownership of the former over these areas. This attitude of the British power denied the sovereignty of Mayurbhanj Raja over these territories which territorially belonged to Mayurbhanj. In thus defining the area of the Jungle Mahals the Company's Government was certainly guided by existing structure of political relationships of these powers of the forest areas and not by any consideration of geographical homogeneity. For had it been so there was no point in the exclusion of Birbhum from the Jungle Mahals and of Mayurbhanj also from that area. The Jungle Mahals of the British description were only an improvised attempt to meet a kind of political situation very limited in its application and dimension. In a broad sense, the term should cover all the Bhum countries of ancient times which had come down to the British period under a variety of territorial transformations.

## *Chapter II*

### **THE ANNEXATION OF THE JUNGLE MAHALS ( 1761-1786 )**

In the later half of the eighteenth century the annexation of the Jungle Mahals marked a remarkable episode in the growth of British paramountcy in India. The British writers, like J. C. Price, mainly on the basis of Midnapore Collectorate Records, some of which were published by Firminger have drawn a very dismal picture of the struggle between the local elements and the early conquistadores in this formative period of British rule in Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

The authors of the District Gazetteers and Census Report, 1956 and some Indian writers like J. Basu<sup>2</sup> have more or less followed that beaten track. But these treatises, inadequate as they were, had missed some salient points necessary to a proper analysis of the evolution of the social institutions and ideas. The study of revenue records of the Government of West Bengal and the volumes of Secret and Political Proceedings and Consultations in the National Archives containing valuable information which could not be had in the Midnapore Collectorate Record Room, was perhaps essential but was neglected by the early authors. Moreover, the local revolts must always be reset in their social context. The authors had not taken into consideration either the socio-economic implications of these social upsurges which assumed the dimensions of militant regionalism or the forces of past history and tradition which shaped these movements. Therefore, it remains to be seen to what extent the available but so

1. Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T., *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India, 1765-1857*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 80.

2. Basu, Jogesh Chandra, *Medinipurer Itihās, Contai*, 1332.



long unutilised materials can restore a complete picture of the scene.

Following Ascoli in his *Early Revenue History of Bengal* and the Fifth Report, 1812 three distinct phases of the Company's rule in the Jungle Mahals from 1761 to 1786 may be formed. The first phase terminating in the great famine of the early 70's was the period of expansion and hesitation. The Company gradually became the Zamindar as well as the Diwan of this region but they hesitated to follow a calculated and systematic policy towards the ruled. This was partly due to lack of proper knowledge of the decaying governmental machinery of the Nawab and partly due to vehement opposition from the Indian elements. The second phase beginning with the Regulating Act of 1773 may be called to be a period of experiments as the introduction of farming system for the collection of revenue marked a departure from the age-old Indian tradition and ultimately it ended disastrously in the early 80's of the century. After the departure of Hastings in 1785 the third phase i.e., the period of determination comes into the picture. In this phase, the Company's government, wiser from their experiences were determined to reach a permanent solution of the problems of land settlement and the consequent consolidation of the British grip over this wide region. This process reached its culmination in the Permanent Settlement and the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1793.

### *Background*

The Permanent Settlement of 1793 could not again solve the existing problem of determining the ownership over the soil. It gave rise to some new problems, which found expression in the then socio-political revolts. Naturally a question emerges, what were the problems that led the Zamindars and civil population of this region to revolt even at that initial stage of British administration? The answer lies partly in the

socio-political background of the period and partly in their past history.

In 1751 fed up with the war with the Marathas, Alivardi Khan made peace with them.<sup>3</sup> By the terms of the peace Mir Habib as the Deputy Governor of Orissa had to spend the surplus revenues of that province to pay off the arrear salary of Raghuji's soldiers. Alivardi agreed to pay annually to the Marathas twelve lacks of rupees from the Bengal revenue as chauth so that "the Marathas would never set their foot again within the dominions" of Alivardi. The river Subarnarekha (wrongly referred to as Sonāmakia by Ghulam Husain) near Jaleswar was fixed as the boundary between Bengal and Orissa.<sup>4</sup> The Marathas continued to occupy the north-east of the Subarnarekha in parganas Bhograi, Kamardachour, Patashpur, Sahabandar and some villages of Gopiballavpur thana. It could not check the Maratha incursions in the south-western Bengal and made the Zamindars of the Jungle Mahals more turbulent and independent-spirited. Dr. K. K. Datta has rightly pointed out that "these paved the way for the establishment of Marathas political supremacy in Orissa."<sup>5</sup> The treaty thus marked the nadir of the nawabs misfortune. The degenerate monarchical authority had no other alternative but to take recourse to the policy of appeasement by grant of territories to adversaries. It was at this period that the British commercial interest was fighting desperately for existence all the world over against the rival trading companies as well as against the Indian rulers. The second Carnatic War with the recall of Dupleix was brought to a honourable conclusion in 1754. But Siraj-ud-dowla endeavoured to restore the lost

3. Stirling, A., *Orissa : Chronology and History*, p. 259 (published in *History of Orissa*, N. K. Sahoo).

4. *Scir Mutakherin or A View of Modern Times*, Vol.II, 1707-1780, Ghulam Husain Tabatabai reprinted by R. Cambray & Co., Calcutta, 1926, pp. 590-91.

5. Datta, K. K., *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 118.

glory of the Subedar of Bengal by capturing Calcutta in 1756. Clive, recovered Calcutta, made peace with the Nawab and then entered into a secret conspiracy against him. The battle of Plassey (1757) a transaction between the Company on the one hand and the self-seeking merchants and bureaucrats on the other, signalised the downfall of the monarchical authority of Bengal. The Nawab of Bengal, as usual once again, fell back upon the policy of bribing the opponent by grant of territories. Orissa was visually lost to the Nawab in 1751. Within six years the revenues of 24-Parganas was assigned to the East India Company. The collapse of the Nawab's authority was then a 'fait accompli'. Mir J'afar was hastily set up as Nawab only to be deposed in 1760.

Mir J'afar was intensely detested by the Zamindars whom Ghulam Husain described as a "malevolent and incorrigible race, dispose to display the standard of rebellion and dispute"<sup>6</sup>. Ramram Singh of Midnapore raised the standard of revolt. He was represented as an enemy of the English and enjoyed confidence of Bussy and Siraj-ud-dowla.<sup>7</sup> Shah Alam II, being guided by Kāmgār Khan and joined by the Maratha army under Sheo Bhatt Sathe, the Rajas of Burdwan, Birbhum and Bishnupur entered Bengal in February 1760 to surprise the Nawab at Murshidabad.<sup>8</sup> Mir J'afar chafed at the despotic attitude of Clive but in 1760 could save his position from the planned invasion of Ali Gauhar (Shah Alam II) only with British assistance.<sup>9</sup> He entered into a secret conspiracy with the Dutch at Chinsura but Clive defeated them at Bedara on 25 November, 1759.<sup>10</sup> The treachery and incompetence of

6. Seiv, Vol. 3, pp. 204-5.

7. Chaudhuri, S. B., *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India (1765-1857)*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 2.

8. Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1934 (1754-71), pp. 540-41; *Seir Mutakherin*, Vol. 2, p. 346.

9. Datta, K. K., *Shah Alam II and the East India Company*, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 5-23.

10. Datta, K. K., *The Dutch in Bengal and Bihar*, Patna, 1948, pp. 66-67.

Mir J'afar and his failure to make regular payments to the Company led to his deposition.<sup>11</sup> By the secret treaty of 27 September 1760, Mir Qasim agreed to pay off the outstanding dues and also to assign the revenues of three districts of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the Company.<sup>12</sup> This fact tends to illustrate once again the Nawabs policy of appeasing a superior power by granting territorial concessions. It was at this period that Clive conquered the northern circars from the French in 1760.

Seated on the masnad in 1760 Mir Qasim had to face the challenge of Asad Zaman Khan, the Raja of Birbhum who seems to have formed a conspiracy with the Raja of Burdwan to over-throw the British.<sup>13</sup> The Rajas of Bissenpur, Ramgur and other countries had offered considerable supplies to the Birbhum Raja. The Raja of Currackpur had committed open hostilities. It was also said that Maharaja Nandakumar was carrying on a treacherous correspondence with the Burdwan Raja and other rebellious chiefs.<sup>14</sup> With the valuable help of the British the Nawab by the end of 1761 compelled them to surrender.

But the administration of Bengal during his regime left the country impoverished. It was said to be a regular pillage rather than a system of Government.<sup>15</sup> As a strong ruler Mir Qasim tried to check the abuses of the Company's servants in the inland trade of Bengal. The result was the battle of Buxar on 22 October, 1764 which was described by a great historian as a

11. Datta, K. K., *Shah Alam II etc.*, p. 14.

12. Vansittart, H. A., *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal, 1760-64*, Vol. 1, London, 1766, pp. 101-104.

13. Long, Rev. J., *Selections from the Unpublished Records of Government from 1748 to 1767 Inclusive*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1869, Introduction, pp. XLIII-IV and Nos. 506-7 (pp. 238-9), 537.

14. Long's *Selections*, No. 553, p. 257.

15. Francis, P., *The Original Minutes of the Governor-General and Council of Fort William .....Rev. of Bengal*, London, 1782, p. 23; Quoted by Chaudhuri, S. B., *Civil Disturbances etc.*, p. 5.

“significantly decisive episode in the history of India”<sup>16</sup>. This battle was won not by treachery but by a straight fight between two rival claimants for supremacy. The East India Company became the King-makers of India. Mir Qasim was beaten and fled and Mir J’afar was once more made Nawab. At this time Lally was beaten by Eyre Coote in the battle of Wandewash in 1760. Pondicherry was, of course, returned to the French by the Peace of Paris but after 1763 the British had no European rival in India.

The feeble, old Mir J’afar died on 5 February, 1765. A Committee of the Board was appointed to seat the successor on the masnad in the proper manner so that “he as well as whole country might see that he received his Government from the Company”<sup>17</sup>. His illegitimate son Najm-ud-daulah was then hastily set up much against his will as the nominal ruler of Bengal as he acceded to the British proposal.<sup>18</sup> The Company also consolidated its position in the ceded districts as well as in the Jungle Mahals. The districts the revenue of which was assigned to the Company in Bengal were completely bankrupt and their people impoverished. The Buckergunj letter of Sergeant Bergo of May 25, 1762, quoted by R. C. Dutt gives a clear picture of the evils generated in the Company’s early administration.<sup>19</sup>

Clive had conquered Bengal in 1757 by a transaction. On 12 August 1765, the crowning act of Clive was the securing of an imperial farman that made the Company the Diwan of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The grant of the imperial farman from the decadent imperial power was historically significant.

16. Datta, K. K., *Shah Alam II and the East India Company*, Chapter II, p. 24.

17. Spencer to Middleton, 8 February, 1765, Fort William, Letter to Court, paras 8, 9.

18. C.P.C. IX, No. 1546. Spencer to Hugh Watts, March 6, 1765, Fort William.

19. Dutt, Romesh, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule*, London, 1956, pp. 23-24.

The Company thus obtained a legal status which counted for much in those days of anarchy and confusion. Dr. K. K. Datta has rightly observed that by the middle of the 18th century the Mughal Empire had virtually collapsed. But the name of the Emperor and the fiction of Imperial suzerainty were sought to be utilised by the powers struggling for establishing paramountcy in India.<sup>20</sup> The Marathas, the English or the French tried to use this fiction for their political ends. In Bengal, victory ultimately came to the British power amidst seething discontent and mass upsurge in the Jungle Mahals. When "oppressions were daily practised which rendered enormous population destitute", an atmosphere of fear and distress was produced. Under these circumstances the annexation of the Jungle Mahals was made.

#### *Problems in 1760-61*

The Company's Government was confronted with three fold inter-connected questions after the assumption of the zamindari rights of Midnapore and adjacent parganas in 1760. These are, how effectively the land revenue could be collected and who was the real owner of the soil. It was also to be investigated as to what was the relation between the ruler, the proprietor of the soil and the original producers. The other problem was how the Company's Government would be able to establish direct relations with the original producers by eliminating the intermediaries from the production-sector ?

In dealing with the first question, i.e. how effectively the land-revenue could be collected, the Company's government had to face three types of difficulties. The Governor-General in Council in Calcutta had his own difficulties, the European Collectors in the Company's service had their own, while Indian Collectors of revenue i.e. Zamindars and farmers in their field had to face a peculiar situation. In 1761 a commercial

20. Datta, K. K., *History of Bengal*, Vol. 2, p. 443.

Company had been called upon to draw up regulations for revenue collection of which they had little or no knowledge or experience. Its local officers, unacquainted as they were with the Indian land-system found little co-operation from the Indian officers like Kanungoes and Zamindar's Naibs. Above all, the currency question was a very serious one for the Collectors.<sup>21</sup> The issue was made more complicated by various differences in local customs, standards of measures and system. This led to a growing suspicion that "the revenue agencies which had been established by the Mughal Government were being deliberately employed to deceive the Company and to fog the Company's agents".<sup>22</sup> The Company's Government had to decide but could not come to a final solution within two decades as to how the land revenue could be collected from the ryots, whether proprietary rights of the Zamindars would be recognised or they might be regarded as hereditary Officers of Government. And if once it was decided that they were merely Revenue Officers, they were liable to be eliminated from the production sector and direct contact with the ryots could be established and land tax collected from them by the European Officers. This indecision on the part of the Company's higher and local officers affected the political situation in the Jungle Mahals giving rise to the difficulties which the Indian Collectors of revenue e.g. Zamindars and farmers had to face in a changed environment after 1761.

The history of the Jungle Mahals from 1761 to 1793 was the history of endeavours on the part of the Company's higher and local officers as well as of Indian revenue collectors for overcoming these three types of difficulties and finally finding out answers to three interconnected questions mentioned at first. And what was the result? The Company's Government had

21. Graham to Sumner etc., 25 May, 1766.

22. Ramsbotham, R. B., Some aspects of the Revenue Collection in Bengal immediately after the assumption of the Diwani, Progs. of the Indian Historical Record Commission, Vol. 5, 1923.

to accept tacitly the ownership of the hereditary proprietors over the soil though not over its fruits. After 1761 the Zamindars were disallowed to levy extra-imposts (Abwabs) except land tax.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the Company's attempt to establish direct link with the original producers resulted in disastrous consequences. The resumption of Ghatwali, Paikan and other non-revenue paying lands ejected a class of ryots out of the existing economy by depriving them means of their means of subsistence and this led to a series of upheavals, socio-political in character, often termed by historians as Chuar Rebellion of 1799.

*The problems of the resident in Midnapore*

As the Zamindar of Burdwan and Midnapore and diwan of suba Bengal the Company proceeded to realise arrears of revenue and to arrange for 'jamabandobasth' (land settlement). The Zamindar-Company in its early phase wanted to enhance revenue and to wipe out the defaulter Zamindars to answer to the pressing demands from England and to meet heavy expenses of war in India. Johnston the first Resident of Midnapur<sup>24</sup> was required to see to the commercial interests of the Company.<sup>25</sup> He was also to administer criminal justice. "His duties ranged from revenue settlement to the expulsion from the district of gangs of robbers and dacoits, to the destruction of a hostile french armament or a skilful negotiation with the Marathas."<sup>26</sup> The thanadars and tahashildars were under his

23. Rev. G. Schanzlin, *Birbhum and Western Bengal in the 10th Century*, Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, Vol. 5, 1929.

24. Son of Sir James Johnston, writer at Dacca, joined at Fulta and participated in the battle of Plassey, Resident at Midnapur, terminated from service in 1764 and charged with malversation of funds.

25. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 1451.

26. Price, J. C., *Notes on the History of Midnapur*, Calcutta, 1876, Vol. I, p. 4.



direction.<sup>27</sup> In 1762 Burdett succeeded Johnston as Resident and in 1764 Anselm Beaumont succeeded Burdett in his office.

Johnston and Burdett increased the collection of land revenue and Johnston particularly was determined to introduce revenue farming by public auction. Clive and his Select Committee thought of farming Midnapur lands but in the peculiar circumstances of Midnapur the Calcutta Council could not carry the plan into execution. The argument of Johnston that the 'ontery' system would by the economic law of competition reveal the value of land, appeared in theory to be correct. In practice this auction settlement proved prejudicial to the landed interests and of the original producers as well. Johnston who himself held farms at an underrate could not expect that the banians and revenue servants working under him would not be fraudulent. Moreover, the Company, anxious to enhance revenue collection, refused steadily to shoulder the responsibility pertaining to the Zamindary right i.e., repair of embankments,<sup>28</sup> maintenance of law and order etc. or to restore stolen goods to the robbed person.

Beaumont pleaded for grant of leases for a term of years instead of annual settlement. He had sought permission to 'hastabud' (farm) an actual valuation of the lands. Hugh Watts who succeeded Beaumont as Resident in October of the same year advocated that a direct land settlement with the ryots, eliminating the Zamindars, was inadmissible. In accordance with his advice the Government on 11 December, 1764, decided that so long as the Zamindars paid their takhshis with regularity it would be unwise to remove them from collections as pensioners. In 1765 Thomas Graham was sent to Midnapore which was brought under the superintendence of Harry Verelst.<sup>29</sup> The Government desired that the Resident would

27. Firminger, *Introduction to Fifth Report etc.*, p. CXXV.

28. Graham to Verelst, 6 April, 1766.

29. Firminger, *Bengal District Records, Midnapur*, Vol. 1, 1763-67, p. 42.

make a circuit of his district once in each year.<sup>30</sup> Graham was inclined to settle land tax with the hereditary proprietors of the soil and wrote a letter of opinion to Clive in tune with his predecessor, Hugh Watts.<sup>31</sup> He also intended to enhance revenue by granting talooks out of the waste lands to any responsible person who was ready to settle on them with the ryots.<sup>32</sup>

The net results of the endeavours of successive Residents was the enhancement of revenue every year which distressed the Zamindars already impoverished by almost annual Maratha inroads.<sup>33</sup> The copious references in the records of the district show how rigorously the district officials collected revenue.<sup>34</sup> Clive wanted to bring uniformity in taxation.<sup>35</sup> But the introduction of new coinage proved precarious for the revenue payers as "Alla Sicca rupees actually received are converted to Calcutta currency and an imaginary batta of 22% was deducted from it".<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the idea of collecting rents from the ryots by European officers could not be entertained due to existence of age-old intermediate collecting agencies.

*"The period of hesitation"..... Ascoli*

The period from 1765 to 1773 was described by Ascoli as that of hesitation. The old Mughal officials were retained in the Governmental hierarchy. The Government was anxious to avoid expenses of evaluating lands by an actual survey. The Cambridge historian states that there were some initial

30. Firminger, Ibid. I, p. 48.

31. Graham to Clive, Midnapur, 24 December, 1765.

32. Graham to Verelst etc., Agrachaw, 11 April, 1766.

33. Firminger, Introduction etc., Vol., I, p. CXXXI; Verelst, Harry, A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of English Government in Bengal, London, 1772.

34. Graham to Clive, 24 December, 1765.

35. Clive to Hugh Watts, 10 October, 1765.

36. Price, Notes etc., p. 196.

disadvantages which induced the Company to adopt the policy of 'festina lente' and move slowly in the matter.<sup>37</sup> The system appeared to be unsatisfactory as a large part of the Company's profits were passing into the hands of the Naib Diwan and his subordinates.<sup>38</sup> The privileged position of the Kanungoes also was questioned. As revenue was settled upon a conjectural valuation, the Kanungoes were in a position to expose the value of the Zamindary to the faujdar. The Zamindars apprehensive of increased revenue always tried to win over the Kanungoes or naib Kanungoes by giving them farms at reduced value. The opinion for the abolition of the Office was respected but their office was restored in 1774. In spite of this their authority gradually crumbled down between 1774 and 1781. Thus the Company's Government failed to utilise the knowledge of land-revenue system which the Kanungoes possessed, which could have been beneficial to both the local officers and Indian Revenue Collectors.

#### *Expedition towards the jungle zamindars*

Immediately after the acquisition of the Diwani in 1765 the Company was obliged to undertake the task of maintaining law and order within and in the southern frontier against Maratha incursions, of safe-guarding the Company's interests in the salt tract and of bringing the 'wardens of the march-lands', the frontier Zamindars under proper control.

The solution of the problem of restoring law and order was reached decisively. But owing to the difficulty of collecting a sufficient number of sepoys, the expedition was put off till January 1767, when it was despatched under Ensign (afterwards Lieutenant) Fergusson, who set out with three or four com-

37. Cambridge History of India, Vol. 5, 1497-1858 (Ed.) Dodwell, H. H., Cambridge 1929, p. 410.

38. Fifth Report, p. 238; also quoted by Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal etc.*, Oxford, 1917, p. 31.

panies of sepoys and one or two European sergeant.<sup>39</sup> On 30 January 1767, Graham instructed Fergusson to adjust revenue with the Zamindars and accept their subordination.

But "such of the Zamindars, as thro' folly or obstinacy shall persist in refusing their submission and attempt opposition to your party you will, of course, proceed against in a hostile manner.....and endeavour to expel them from their dominions." The obstinate Zamindars might further be weakened "by giving the personal property and possession of people up to plunder.....and by destroying as much as possible their refuge and strongholds."

Verelst, the Governor-General approved the instructions in general, but disapproved the method of punishment.

"The sepoys excited by a thirst of plunder will be guilty of a thousand enormities. It will be out of power of their officers to restrain them from committing the shocking extremities. The Zamindars also will be driven to despair. The country will be depopulated by the flight of its inhabitants".<sup>40</sup>

But in the course of subsequent years this liberal policy towards the landlords was not implemented. Indiscipline, the order of the day, became rampant in the army, stationed to subjugate the Jungle Mahals. To maintain discipline a sepoy was court-martialed in 1773.<sup>41</sup> There were frequent alterations in the ranks of sepoys to preserve the discipline of the brigade sepoys.<sup>42</sup> The Company instead of stabilising law and order became responsible for destroying peace of the Jungle Mahals. It allowed the newly recruited sepoys to fill up their pockets by "plundering the effects of the poor Zamindars and their attendant paiks". In the records a common picture was often depicted. On the approach of the Company's sepoys the villagers fled away to the jungles and hills and "the

39. Graham to Fergusson, 4 February 1767.

40. From H. Verelst to John Graham, Calcutta, 1 February 1767.

41. Samuel Lewis to William Aldersey, 19 July 1773.

42. Aldersey to Samuel Lewis, 14 August 1773.

sepoys fired at random at the poor people as they were running away. The officer commanding was helpless to restrain them".<sup>43</sup>

*Fergusson on march*

Graham could not accompany Fergusson as he was transferred to Burdwan. Instead he sent two men, Kartikram and Chandan Ghosh to help Fergusson in adjusting revenue with the Zamindars. Fergusson issued orders of summon to the jungle Zamindars to pay their submission and settle revenue with him. Then he proceeded from Balarampur to coerce each Zamindar separately who refused to obey.<sup>44</sup> Fergusson arrived at Derhwha on 3 February 1767. There Kalianpore Zamindar acknowledged his dependence and as his trifling tribute of Rs. 30/- was by no means commensurate with the extent of his pargana, Fergusson increased his tribute. Sundar-narayan, the Zamindar of Fulkusma wanted to pay Rs. 300/- but he was asked to pay Rs. 500/- annually. In addition he was required to pay a huge sum to the Company for a robbery at Anandapur, (a few miles north of Midnapur where the Company had a salt Golah) which was proved to have been committed by his people.

The Jhargram Zamindar played tricks with the Company for a time but did not submit. Naturally Fergusson marched against him and reached Bandhgora on the outskirts of Jhargram and wanted to starve them to surrender. The Zamindar in alarm fled away. According to the instruction of Graham, Fergusson asked the run away to surrender. But as the sardar of Radhanagar had already surrendered his largest stronghold, he was compelled to come to a compromise. He executed a 'teshbee' (obligation) paper for future subordination and regular payment. The Zamindar of Jamboni tamely submitted

43. From Rooke to Vansittart, 8 June 1768.

44. From Graham to Ensign John Fergusson, 1 February 1767.

without resistance.<sup>45</sup> But Fergusson "being a stately man" could not keep patience with the Zamindars who pretended poverty to avoid payment of annual revenue. The Zamindar of 'Jathbienie' (Jathbhumi) accompanied by his subjects came to file a petition instead of running away. The Zamindar of 'Sankacoolia' (Lalgarh) went out of his way to satisfy the monetary thirst of the British overlord. The advance of the sepoys under a British Officer and the news of their tyranny caused terror among the helpless Zamindars. The British exploitation of the Zamindars was clearly illustrated by the settlement figures<sup>46</sup> :

	<i>Paid Formerly</i>	<i>New Settlement</i>
Ramgarh pargana } and Sankacoolia }	A. Rs. 126/6/-	A.S. Rs. 616/- ,, Rs. 879/11/6
Jambuni } Jathbhumi }	A.S. Rs. 84, 15/10	,, Rs. 516/- ,, Rs. 703/-
Jhargram	,, Rs. 238/11/15	,, Rs. 400/11/- <hr/> Rs. 3115/6/6

But Fergusson could understand that owing "to robberies committed on one another and from the oppression of the former Collector, many are really in no condition to pay a considerable revenue."<sup>47</sup> The political unstability also encouraged freebooters like Damodar Singh to carry on depredations on the neighbouring tracts. Naturally Graham directed him "to apprehend Damodar Singh in course of his progress."<sup>48</sup> Damodar retired to the jungly part of the 'Amiyanagar' (Ambikanagar) pargana and the Company's troops from Bishnupur continued their fruitless pursuit after him causing alarm among the peaceful inhabitants of the region. The Phulkusma Zamindar had without hesitation agreed to pay the sum demanded for the robbery at Anandapur and Graham

45. Graham to Fergusson, 9 February 1767.

46. Fergusson to Graham, 11 February 1767.

47. Idem, 14 February 1767.

48. Graham to Fergusson, 16 February 1767.

directed Fergusson to extort as much as the parganas of Raipur and Phulkusma could afford to pay. The Amyenagar and Chatna Zamindars fled to the jungles as the Bishnupur troops proceeded. Later on, the vakils of Ameyanagar offered to submit on behalf of their master. But owing to depredations committed simultaneously by the peoples of Damodar Singh and the Company's troops they were unable to satisfy the demands of the Company. The Barabhum Zamindar though disposed to surrender, fled away into the jungles along with his followers at the sight of the Company's troops.<sup>49</sup> But these flights into the jungles appeared to Fergusson to be mere excuses to avoid settlement. He held out a threat to the Zamindars of Suphur, Barabhum and Amyanagar by issuing an ultimatum. He was advised by the Resident to delay final settlement with the Phulkusma and Raipur Rajas presumably with an eye to future advantage.<sup>50</sup> He was directed to follow the same method which was followed against the Jhargram Zamindar. On 6 March 1767, the five Zamindars came to a settlement with him. Yet he took precaution of stationing a force to keep the Zamindars in awe. At first the Raja of Manbhum declined to pay any revenue as he had never submitted to any authority. Later on owing to the wise persuasion of the two Dewans of Barabhum and Chatna he thought it expedient to arrange annual revenue. Fergusson sent a sketch of the settlement of the five Zamindars as follows :—

<i>Parganas</i>		<i>Annual revenue</i>
Supher	...	A.S. Rs. 54/-
Aymenagar	...	Rs. 311/-
Barabhum	...	Rs. 441/-
Manbhum	...	Rs. 316/-
Chatna	...	Rs. 879/11/-
(Alla sicca Rs.)		<u>A.S. Rs. 2101/11/-</u>

49. Fergusson to Graham, 10 February 1767.

50. Idem, 22 February 1767.

Graham was satisfied as the settlement of Fergusson far exceeded the 'Jamma bandobasth' (revenue settlement) rated in the King's Book (Abdul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*). He also hoped that by keeping them under proper subjection the stipulations might be considerably enhanced.<sup>51</sup>

The Zamindar of Ghatsila or the Raja of Dhalbhum as he was called proved to be most obstinate and refractory. He was determined not to admit a '*Phryngo*' (Firingi-Christian) in his country and made all preparations to resist the English infiltration by felling trees and barricading all narrow passes, leading to Dhalbhum. He strengthened his position by allying himself with Damodar Singh.<sup>52</sup> Fergusson proceeded through the territories of Jambunie Zamindar and sent him an ultimatum to submit. But his 'harcaros' (peons) were stopped on the way by about 150 bow men. Mogul Ray, Zamindar of Jathbhumi and a determined opponent of Ghatsila Zamindar also joined the Company's sepoys. The forces led by Fergusson were very much harassed by the paiks of the Raja who entrenched themselves behind a parapet of 'palisadoes'. At Bind about 200 Ghatsila paiks tried to resist the Company's troops but were repulsed. The party under Sergeant Bascombe became once more unrestrained. On 21 March a vakil arrived from the Raja to offer peace-terms. But as the Company's demand was much more than Rs. 5,000 - the protracted fighting continued. When they reached near the fort the people within abandoned it by the backdoor and set fire on the reserved ammunitions and food stuffs to starve the Company's troops. The Raja with a numerous, though vanquished army, retired into a hill about a coss distance. Fergusson intended to settle the pargana with his nephew who was residing in his Barabhum pargana or to hand it over to Mughol Roy, the hostile Zamindar of Jathbhumi. Discussions were made with the neighbouring Zamindars

51. Idem, 12 March 1767 as well as 14 March 1767.

52. Fergusson to Graham, 16 February 1767.



and the nephew invited to take over the charge of the Zamindary. On 29 March 1767, the old Zamindar was, however, arrested and his immoveable properties as usual were plundered by the Company's troops. The old Zamindar whose name never appeared in the records, was fortunately granted an allowance of Rs. 30/- per month and was ordered to be kept at Midnapore.<sup>53</sup> On 6 April 1767, 'Kundali', (Kanu Daloi) a near relation of the deposed chief arrived at 'Narsingur' (Nrisinghar) and Fergusson invested him with the name 'Jagernat Dol' (Jagannath Dhal) and settled his annual revenue. The chiefs undertook to be punctual in paying off the amount fixed.<sup>54</sup> But the expectations of the early British rulers of the Jungle Mahals faded away in dreams very soon. The economic and political compulsions by the Company's Government like restrictions on export of salt and on police duties, resumption of non-revenue paying lands and rigorous enforcement of long-neglected Mughol rule of making Zamindars responsible for robberies committed by his men prompted the Zamindar to rise against the British rule.

After the transfer of Graham, Vansittart was appointed the Resident of Midnapore on 25 March, 1767. He asked Fergusson to order all the Zamindars to send their vakils to Midnapore in order to be more sure of revenue collection. But objections of Fergusson and the fear of total suspension of revenue by the Zamindars prompted Vansittart to drop the proposal. The Zamindar of Baliaberia and Naib of Choira danced attendance on him. Realising the fate of the old Zamindar of Ghatsila and being afraid of their life and property the other Zamindars of the Janpore thana became anxious to settle revenue.

But Chatna as noticed was again threatened by the faujdar of Panchet. Previously Fergusson settled revenue with the Zamindar of Chatna on rigorous terms as it belonged to the

53. From Fergusson to Vansittart, 30 April 1767.

54. Idem, 9 April 1767.

Company. But Panchet faujdar by orders from Moorshidabad, summoned the Zamindar of Chatna to settle his rents under threat of military pressure.<sup>55</sup> Self-interest prompted the Chatna Zamindar to take shelter under the protection of the superior power. Francis Sykes directed the faujdar to withdraw and leave the collection of revenue to Vansittart, the Resident of Midnapore.

All these settlements with the refractory chiefs had the effect of rendering the annexation of the Jungle Mahals complete and decisive. It gave rise to new problems. The Company made what they intended—the rigorous imposition of revenue. But the problem remained with its regular collection in a changing economy. The former power and prestige of these “wardens of march-lands” had declined. The British Company was bent on establishing peace by suppressing free-booters and enhancing revenue by encouraging cultivation of waste lands.<sup>56</sup> There were, restrictions, moreover, on indigenous trade and industry such as salt and textile.<sup>57</sup> Naturally they revolted against authority and endeavoured to enlist the sympathy of their hereditary leaders. The highly spirited, turbulent paiks did not easily submit to the British authority. They forced the new Ghatsila Raja to join with them. Allured by the hope of independence and partly under intimidation of his freedom loving subjects he joined the rebellion. But the British authorities showed a frightful lack of prudence in dealing with the Zamindar. It thus appears that the expulsion of the old Ghatsila Raja from his estates led to great commotion in the mahals.

The news of this revolt of the Ghatsila Raja was received by Fergusson at Balarampur on 6 July 1767, with astonish-

55. *Idem*, 21 June, 1767.

56. Vansittart to James Alexander, Collector-General, 10 April, 1769.

57. Bolts, William, *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, London, 1772, Vol. I, pp. 176-7.

ment.<sup>58</sup> It would seriously hamper revenue collection and affect the tranquillity of the neighbouring parganas. Vansittart was inclined to sow dissension among the paiks. He threatened the hostile paiks of Colianpur, Sankacoola, Jathbhumi and Jambani and wrote to the Ghatsila Raja that he was coming to free him from the tyranny of his formidable paiks and asked to send him a wakil to meet him. Fergusson wrote to Ghatsila Raja to arrest that 'free-booter' and to return all plundered properties.<sup>59</sup> On his refusal Fergusson himself marched against him. The Raja of Ghatsila was compelled to climb down, was readily forgiven and others were punished. One Company of soldiers was stationed at Ghatsila to terrorise the Raja and his subjects.<sup>60</sup>

In 1767 November, crisis developed when Ozuderam, Zamindar of Narajole and several of his adherents refused to acknowledge the British suzerainty or settle annual revenue. They found asylum in the Zamindary of Rani Shiromoni. C. Collins, Commander of the 2nd battalion of sepoy, operated against him. Laddar Singh, the Zamindar of Mongolpota, also took shelter in the jungles.<sup>61</sup> The Company's troops marched towards Singpore and the rebel leaders fled away to Karnagarh about five miles north-east of Midnapore. Collins requested Fergusson to cooperate with him to quell the disturbances.<sup>62</sup> The passive resistance of Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh became an obstacle to the growth and consolidation of the British Zamindari interest in the Jungle Mahals. The interest of the British imperialists demanded the complete annihilation of the Rani's power and they were successful at last.

Simultaneously with economic exploitation and the conse-

58. Das, Narendranath, *History of Midnapur*, Vol. I, p. 68.

59. Fergusson to Vansittart, 2 August, 1767.

60. Idem, 27 August, 1767.

61. Collins to Vansittart, 2 December, 1767.

62. Idem, 6 December, 1767.

quent emergence of agrarian disturbances the Company's zealous servants followed the policy of territorial advance beyond the mahals at the cost of weak neighbours. Like the pargana of Chatna Singhbhum was not also included within Bengal. The Company's local officials wanted to annex Singhbhum taking advantage there of a family quarrel but as the Company was then in good terms with the Bhonsle's of Nagpur, the higher authorities were unwilling to settle revenue with a Marathas territory.<sup>63</sup>

As the scope for territorial expansion was limited the Resident could enhance revenue by extorting more money from the subordinate Zamindars. In Manbhum the Zamindar could not agree to the British demands. The Zamindar was driven out and with Gouriram, his near relation, revenue was settled. The Barabhum vakils begged for settlement and Fergusson did that with the old Zamindar. In alarm the Zamindar of Panchet fled to Nagpur where his daughter was married.<sup>64</sup> Fergusson marched to Runizipur to bring the Zamindar to a sense of dependence and to pay the revenue either directly or through the Suphur pargana who had a claim on it. But the Zamindar of Chatna put claim on the revenue of Runizipur.<sup>65</sup> The Zamindar of Runizipur found himself in between two fires and fled away. He could not be persuaded to resettle revenue. It was handed over to the Suphur Zamindar. The Chatna Zamindar came to help the Runizipur Zamindar to recover the lost possession and himself suspended payment. Fergusson inflicted corporal punishment on his vakil for breach of contract and extorted a mutchelekha (agreement) to pay revenue in the month of Fagun. The Zamindar was threatened by an ultimatum.<sup>66</sup> The agrarian discontent touched Ghatsila also. Jagannath Dhal had neither

63. Verelst to Vansittart, 19 March, 1768.

64. Fergusson to Vansittart, 6 February, 1768.

65. Idem, 20 January, 1768.

66. Idem, 28 January, 1768.

the intention nor the means to discharge his financial obligations. Very soon he gave umbrage to his protector by intimations of inimical designs and by his refusal to pay revenue which fell into arrears.<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant Rooke was sent with two Companies of Sepoys to establish his authority over the pargana.<sup>68</sup>

The Jumbunie Zamindar with his paiks stood by the side of the Company. But Rooke, the commanding Officer at Ghatsila failed to capture Jagannath who fled away. The Company's troops in disgust began to fire on the bewildered inhabitants who giving up cultivation took shelter in the jungles. His brother Nimu Dhal who was apprehended, was installed in his place. In 1768, when Captain Morgan was sent against Jagannath, he found the whole coutry up in arms against the British authority.<sup>69</sup> All the landed chiefs of the country in 1768 seem to have rallied round Jagannath along with their festering masses. The revolt of the Raja of Ghatsila was also supported by the Sardar of Dompara.<sup>70</sup> The Zamindar of Chakulia harassed the British troops. He attacked Sergeant Bascomb on his march several times and cut down trees on the road to prevent his march. Jibbon Roy, the Zamindar of Cockpara attacked the sepoys of Morgan stationed at Burcoola. The Zamindars sent their cattle to Mayurbhanj for safety. Morgan was subjected to a most harassing jungle warfare, "enemies lurked in small bands 'like a parcel of wasp', and would never come near him but sting him with their arrows and then fly off."

The Captain on account of lack of boats could not cross the Subarnarekha. The soldiers fell ill and stock of provision was also exhausted. The newly appointed Raja Nimoo and

67. Vansittart to Richard Becher, 1 June, 1768.

68. Chaudhuri, S. B., *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India (1765-1857)*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 54.

69. Price, J. C., *Notes etc.*, p. 58.

70. Das, Narendranath, *History of Midnapur*, Vol. I, p. 86.

Diwan Kripasindoo were afraid of the old Raja. In disgust Morgan was compelled to follow a conciliatory policy towards the rebels. He advised the Government to restore the authority of Jagannath Dhal and not to countenance Nimu, as that would be financially worse.<sup>71</sup> The other side also seems to have been exhausted and owing to rainy season the peasants wanted to return to peaceful means of cultivation. Jagannath Patra, the Dompura sardar sent his brother with peace-terms, but he was detained and his cattle were not returned. The Cockpara Zamindar remained unsubdued. For the time being operations were suspended. Morgan was encouraged when at Huldypooker some of the peaceful chiefs including Jagannath Patra surrendered. But Jagannath Dhal fled to Bamanghati, which belonged to the Raja of Mayurbhanj. Morgan sent a threatening letter to the Zamindar of Bamanghati to handover Jagannath to him on pain of plunder and destruction of his country.<sup>72</sup> But the Captain had to climb down as Bamanghati was a Maratha country. He had to contend with a fanfare of heroics and a new tax of one anna was levied on every rupee the people paid to the Raja to compensate the loss. As the disturbances had already occasioned a deficiency in the rents to the extent of sicca rupees 721-5-11.<sup>73</sup>

The year 1769 witnessed a new epoch in the history of Midnapore and the Jungle Mahals. The jungle Zamindars were subdued and their land revenue was settled on the point of bayonet. But British position in the mahals was threatened by the peasant militia of the Zamindars. The Chuars or the Bhumij inhabiting the hills between Ghatsila and Barabhum were the original inhabitants of the Jungle Mahals of Midnapore and other adjoining tracts of the parganas. They comprised the local militia of the Zamindars and tilled their paikan lands in times of peace free of land tax. Historians and con-

71. Price, *Op.cit.*, pp. 60-61.

72. Morgan to Vansittart, 6 August, 1768.

73. Vansittart to Richard Becher, 23 September, 1768.

temporary officials contemptuously described them as wild tribes and bandits inhabiting the Jungle Mahals of Midnapore.

The paiks were divided into three ranks distinguished by names taken from their occupation or weapons which they chiefly used. First, the Paharis carried a large shield made of wood covered with hide and the Khanda-sword. They were stationed chiefly as guards. Second, the Banua who used the match-lock, took the field on distant expeditions. Third, the Dhenkiyas are armed with bows and arrows and performed all sorts of duties.<sup>74</sup> According to Stirling, an authority on the 19th century History of Orissa, the paiks or landed militia belonged to the lowest caste such as kanduras, pans and bowries.<sup>75</sup>

The years 1798-99 witnessed the climax of the Chuar and paik rebellion as it was narrated by Price<sup>76</sup> yet the smouldering heat of discontent began to increase from the early 60's of the 18th century. Comparison may be drawn though far-fetched with the socio-economic révolts of the Bundschuh league in Germany or peasant uprisings in England in the early 16th century led by mystic mendicants or disbanded landsknechts<sup>77</sup>, with this difference that the Chuar rebellion was not coloured by religious mysticism or utopian socialistic ideas like Anabaptism. The same paik upsurge happened in Orissa in the early 19th century. In March 1817, the Khonds of Ghumsur in Orissa rose in revolt joined with the militant paiks led by Jagabandhu Vidyadhar who guided the famous Khurda rebellion.<sup>78</sup> In the Jungle Mahals the paiks were reinforced by the

74. Toyonbee, G. A., *Sketch of the History of Orissa from 1803 to 1828 with Appendices*, Calcutta, 1873, p. 13.

75. Stirling, A., *Orissa : Chronology and History and Religion, Antiquities, Temples and Civil Architecture*, Asiatic Researches, Vol. 15, 1822 ; Included also in N. R. Sahoo's *A History of Orissa*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1956, p. 38.

76. Price, J. C., *Chuar Rebellion in the Jungle Mahals*.

77. Lindsay, *History of Reformation*, Vol. 1, p. 110, Fn.

78. Sahoo, N. K., *History of Orissa*, pp. 395-396.

Chuars or the Bhumij. It had one difference with the paik rebellion of Orissa that the Paik Rebellion in Orissa originated from an extreme sense of regionalism and was directed against the British as well as the new Bengali overlords.<sup>79</sup> But this sense of regionalism was absent in the Jungle Mahals. This Paik Rebellion seems to be a natural form of protest against the British annexation of the south-western part of the Bengal Presidency. It was something that happened as a natural consequence of the short-sighted policy and economic exploitation of the local officials and experiments in land revenue of the Company.<sup>80</sup>

In course of his official visit of the western Jungle Mahals in early 1769, Vansittart expected that the revenue could be enhanced only by making the people civilised and engaging them in peaceful cultivation. But his pious wishes were kept in cold storage when a large number of paiks invaded Barabhum and Ghatsila and forced the later Zamindar to retire to the fort of Narsingur.<sup>81</sup> Ordered by Vansittart, Captain Forbes moved by way of Ghatsila, and Lieutenant Nun by way of Barabhum with five companies of sepoys and two small field guns.<sup>82</sup> Nun had to face stout resistance of the paiks and succeeded in a skirmish after a heavy slaughter.<sup>83</sup> Vansittart ordered Forbes to lay hold of Bang Singh and hang him up to set an example. Nun came to terms with Sardar Lall Singh and extorted a *mutchleca* (agreement) from him. He was directed to bring Tirboolam Singh to Midnapore to prevent future commotions and to hang Subla Singh on the spot. Nun settled his business at Barabhum and marched towards Ambiknagar. Vansittart instructed Forbes to join with Nun there. But the British position was seriously challenged Nun was surprised

79. Sahoo, N. K., *History of Orissa*, p. 396.

80. Toyonbee, G. A., *History of Orissa etc.*, p. 13.

81. Vansittart to James Alexander, 10 April 1769.

82. Vansittart to Verelst, 20 December 1769.

83. Vansittart to Claud Russell, 24 December 1769.



amongst the hills and jungles. For a time the western Jungle Mahals went out of the authority of the Company. The bewildered sepoy betook themselves to flight after a heavy slaughter. A sergeant, a subedar and about 20 sepoy were killed. Nun along with a subedar and about 40 other sepoy was wounded. From the subordinate Zamindar of Ghatsila, Vansittart received news that a party of 20 sepoy had left by Forbes at Kuchang had been cut off by treachery. There was no doubt that Forbes himself would be imprisoned within the hills. Lt. Batemann was instructed to reinforce.<sup>84</sup> There was danger within the mahals when external danger also threatened the British position.

The beginning of 1770 was a very critical period for the Company's rule in the Jungle Mahals. It witnessed the Company's very existence in jeopardy. Further troubles were caused by the Raja of Mayurbhanj and his subordinates in Kuchang and Bamanghati estates who were nominally subject to the Maratha governor of Orissa. The turbulent Jungle Mahals taxed Vansittart so heavily that he could not spare troops to prevent frontier incursions of the bargirs.<sup>85</sup> When all these pieces of information reached Calcutta, the Governor-General in Council in anger contemplated to take disciplinary action against Nun for his imprudence. But Vansittart pleaded moderation and the helpless officer was saved from the wrath of the Calcutta Council only to be severely attacked with fever. The Resident of Midnapore followed the cautious policy of reward and punishment towards the rebels.

The crowning measure was to enrol the disgruntled paiks in the Indian Regiment. On 25 February 1770, John Cartier instructed Vansittart to raise new recruits from the bewildered

84. Idem, and to Cartier, President and Governor, Midnapore 19 January 1770.

85. From Vansittart to Hon'ble John Cartier, Midnapore, 29 January 1770.

paiks. These paiks who were turned into loyal and efficient army, fought for the Company to consolidate the British empire in India and outside.

Govardhan Barnaik, the Zamindar of Coochung, Kripasindu and Subal Singh were expelled.<sup>86</sup> New loyal men were appointed in their place, such as Norinda and Dasrathy Bhanja. The sepoys under Forbes and Nun were withdrawn. Peiarce, the Resident directed Goodyar to extort mutchlecas and money to meet the expenses of raising the paik militia to quell recent disturbances from the Rajas of Barabhum, Ambikanagar and Ghatsila. The newly recruited paik militia could not keep strict discipline and began to hover over the innocent famine stricken cultivators. The people of Ghatsila in despair complained of the violences committed by the sepoys. They were also unable to pay taxes as the rate of revenue was considerably high.<sup>87</sup> In spite of all these protests by 14 June 1770, Peiarce could inform Claud Russel, the Collector-General that Lieut. Goodyar had returned to Midnapore, as he found that the western front was rendered quiet.

### *Famine of 1769-70*

In the mid 18th century the net result of these military operations successively by the nawabs troops, bargirs and the Company's battalions, accompanied by economic drain and natural calamity, was to make the forest and salt tracts, a land of poverty and famine. And "the intensity of such famines and the loss of lives caused by them are largely due to the chronic poverty of the people."<sup>88</sup> Early in 1769 high prices gave an indication of an approaching famine. Restrictions were imposed on export of rice but its price gradually increased.<sup>89</sup> Failure of crops due to natural calamity was

86. John Pelarce to Lieut. Goodyar, Midnapore, 13 April 1770.

87. Peiarce to Lieut. Carter, Midnapore, 24 April 1770.

88. Dutt, Romesh, *Economic History etc.*, p. 51.

89. The medium price of rice in Midnapore from September 1769

aggravated by destruction by insects. The labour class died in alarming numbers paralysing transportation of commodities.<sup>90</sup>

The Government was also reported to be determined to take every measure in their power to provide against the fatal consequences.<sup>91</sup> In the middle of 1770 Peiarce, the temporary Resident at Midnapore, prayed for a permission to distribute among the famine-stricken population, a daily subsistence of rice. It was reported that "many hundreds had travelled to the Maratha districts with the expectations of cheap rice." So for fear of lands being depopulated a sum of about Rs. 20/- to Rs. 25/- per day and in rice was granted. The resident was also advised to take care to deal not with a lavish hand.<sup>92</sup>

#### *Effects of famine .*

The famine had several important effects in the socio-economic framework of salt and forest tracts as well as in the Governmental policy. For the first time in centuries the Nimki and Jungle Mahals remained severely under-populated for two generations. It diminished the saving capacity of the producers and reduced taxable capital. One can not possibly quote any exact figure to illustrate how the famine had affected different classes of people but there is no denying the fact that the artisan class and the agricultural community in Midnapore and the adjacent territories were greatly impoverished. Non-resident cultivators were encouraged to occupy lands at cheap

to September 1770 was as follows : Sept. 35 seers for the rupee, Oct. 23, Nov. 25, Dec. 22, January 22 1/2, February 20 1/2, March 15 1/2, April 16, May 14 1/2, June 12 1/2, July 12, August 12, Sept. 21 1/4. This is quoted in a letter from Edward Baber to Claud Russell, Collector-General, dated Midnapore 4 October, 1770. The weight of the seer is not given but as the seer of 80 tolas sicca weight was used in salt weighments, it is probable that it is the standard here also.

90. Progs. G.G. in C. Vol. 44, letter from Peiarce.

91. Ed. Baber, Secretary, to James Alexander, Collector-General, Fort William, 23 October, 1769.

92. Claud Russell to the Resident, Calcutta, 10 June, 1770.

rates. This increasing importance of the Paikast ryot was a new feature of agrarian economy in the south-western Bengal. Many of the Zamindars or hereditary farmers of the revenue were ruined due to inability to collect regular rent from an enfeebled peasantry. Hunter dates the ruin of two-thirds of old aristocracy from this time.<sup>93</sup> Most of the Zamindars were in 1770 not in a position to advance money to the ryots (takavi). Heavy loss of life of the agricultural population caused a steady decline in the Company's profits. The monopoly in trade of salt etc. enjoyed by the Exclusive Society was abolished by the order of the Court of Directors. The Company's authorities in England and local officials in India began to blame one another. In the meantime the Company's servants amassed huge profits by creating new openings for themselves.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, the Company's servants not only monopolised the grain in order to make high profits but they compelled the cultivators to sell even the requisite seed. The Court of Directors being seized of the serious nature of the crisis asked for full reports<sup>95</sup> and urged to inflict exemplary punishment on those who dared to counteract the benevolence of the Company and entertain a thought of profiting by the universal distress.<sup>96</sup> The complaint of Becher and Md. Reza Khan that a monopoly of rice was being carried on by the gomasthas of Englishmen was never properly investigated.

The famine brought in greater degree a sense of immorality not only among the Company's servants. It also brought about a condition of anarchy in the countryside. There was a steady increase in the depredations of the dacoits. The old remedy of making Zamindars responsible for the depredations

93. Hunter, W. W., *Annals of Rural Bengal* etc., p. 57.

94. According to Hastings famine was aggravated due to the "want of a principle of Government, adequate to the substance of responsibility" and for this the Court of Directors to be blamed" (Progs. of the G.G. in C. Vol. III, Middleton's letter).

95. Court of Directors per Mansfield dated the 10 April 1770.

96. Hunter, *Annals* etc., p. 420.

in their Zamindaries could not be maintained in a changed environment of Nizamat in decline. The choukey system maintained by the Zamindars by appointing Paiks and granting them chakran lands could not be renewed. Naturally the local police system collapsed whereas the Company's Government could not effectively reorganise the thanadari system. Adding fuel to the fire, the police recruited by the Company became indisciplined and committed excesses on the peaceful inhabitants, such as in Ghatsila.<sup>97</sup> Very often battalions of Sepoys were transferred from place to place and even there were cases of court-martial.<sup>98</sup> The enfeebled landlords fell against one another and carried away different moveable means of production to add to their strength.<sup>99</sup> Owing to famine a landless class emerged, who committed depredations over the newly assessed ryots occupying lands at a cheap rate. The famine thus effected the system of land tenure and led to the consequent emergence of a sense of 'insecurity in a changing economy.

The emergence of a condition of anarchy was also due to another fact. This was the policy of the Company to ensure maximum collection of tax from the tenants. In spite of distress, the revenue was collected with 'cruel severity' and the supervisors and amils competed with each other to ensure its collection. There was no diminution of the revenue owing to its being violently kept up to its former standard.<sup>100</sup> Before the close of 1769 Vansittart could report that owing to want of rain and failure in crop production it was not possible to settle land revenue on as advantageous terms as he had done

97. Peiarce to Lieut. Cartier, 24 April 1770.

98. Samuel Lewis, Resident to William Aldersey, 19 July 1773.

99. The Zamindars of Silda carried on depredations on the neighbouring areas with his chuars as reported by Capt. Forbes on 30 May 1773 from Holdypooker.

100. Extract from India Office Records, quoted in Hunter's Annals etc., p. 381.

the last year.<sup>101</sup> Five per cent was only remitted in 1770 and 10 per cent added in the year following.<sup>102</sup> And the last effect of famine was that the Kanungos who were the custodians of all revenue documents disappeared as a class. This added to the difficulty of revenue assessment and hastened the decision on the part of the Company's authorities to stand forth as Diwan and to introduce the five years farming system which very soon proved to be a confused experiment.

*The aftermath of the Regulating Act, 1773*

The Regulating Act of 1773 thus opened a baffling period. The judiciary was reorganised and the Supreme Court was established with the avowed object of administering justice to the Company's servants and to protect the newly created landed interest. But friction between different organs of the Government culminated in the Kassijora case of 1779-80. The Council denied the jurisdiction of the Court over the Raja of Kassijura and the Court accused the Council of contempt of Court.

Moreover, the period of hesitation in the land revenue system gave way to a period of centralisation in 1772. On May 11, 1772, the Company stood forth as Diwan. The machinery for habitual extortion with Naiḍ Diwan and mufassal Kanungos came to an end. The Company decided to let out the lands to revenue farmers for a period of five years. English Collectors were appointed for each district to be supervised by a Board of Revenue in Calcutta. "Insufficient 'izaradars' or farmers bidding higher than Zamindars, speculating Calcutta banians anxious to invest money in the most beneficial farms, Zamindars tenacious of their hereditary possessions out bidding others—composed the body of farmers

101. From the Resident to Claud Russell, Collector-General, dated Midnapore, 24 December 1769.

102. Smith, *Oxford Hist.*, p. 501.

under the new system.”<sup>103</sup> This shows the unpreparedness of the Company to take over the charge of the revenue administration. In fact, the farming system was nothing but a stop-gap arrangement to reach a solution of the problems still unsolved. The problems were to determine who was the owner of the soil and what exactly was the relation between the Company, the proprietor of the soil and the original producers. The Company also wanted to find out ways and means to establish direct relation with the original producers in the production-sector by eliminating intermediaries. The problems remained unsolved and the old decaying system could not be replaced by new arrangements on a solid basis.

*The period of experiments—farming system*

The farmers were not recognised as the owners of the soil but considered tax Collectors. New adventurers looking only to a temporary profit, made high offers in the competition sale, subjected the cultivators to every kind of exaction, but defaulted in paying promised revenue. Land was thus turned into a “commodity to be marketed and mortgaged.”<sup>104</sup> In the words of Francis “they strained the country in order to accumulate a rapid fortune and in the end perhaps obtaining remissions in their pockets.” The bankers and merchants were not prepared to advance money to the farmers as they were men of desperate fortunes.”<sup>105</sup>

The most noticeable feature of the five year farming system was overassessment. There was agitation for a new settlement which would not press upon the farmers. The Bishnupur settlement was overrated and as the farmers expressed their indignation, a new settlement was made. A similar rearrange-

103. Sinha, Narendra Krishna, *Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. 2.

104. Thompson and Garrat, *Rise and Fulfilment etc.*, p. 121.

105. *Progs. of the whole Council*, Vol. IV, Part I.

ment was made in Panchet.<sup>106</sup> In the changed framework sometimes security became the farmer and the Zamindar became the kutkinadar or under-farmer of their own hereditary property. In many areas of the Jungle and Nimki Mahals the Zamindars themselves were converted into farmers.<sup>107</sup> The farmers were granted amilnamas or commissions in the name of the Government which gave them power to annul Zamindary pattas and to issue new pattas to the ryots. There was very often clash of interests between the farmers and under-farmers. One attempted to shift the burden of responsibility to the other leading to endless complications.<sup>108</sup> In some cases the Zamindars were granted mushoira or maintenance allowance when they themselves became farmers.

With the negation of hereditary rights of the Zamindars over the soil, the problem of repairing and maintaining embankments came to the forefront and it was found that the Company's government before the 90's of the century was slow to take over the responsibility.<sup>109</sup> For drought and inundation sometimes remissions were granted but this was a longdrawn process. Even Zamindars were called to account and imprisoned for non-payment of farmed revenue within the stipulated period.<sup>110</sup> The suspicion that the Zamindars had inexhaustible

106. Progs. Rev. Board of the whole Council, 10 April 1774 ; R.B.P. 4639 ; O.C., 15 April, No. 12.

107. Progs. of G.G. in C. Revenue, Vol. 20.

108. 5 June, 1775, Contai : Letter from G. Sumner, W. Pye enclosing a petition from Basanta Roy, complaining of the maltreatment of the Zamindars of Hijli together with the letter's explanation called for by Sumner. Progs. G.G. in C ; O.C. 20 June 1775, No. 4. Again the Zamindars of Jalamutha, Sujamutha and Keoramal parganas petitioned that they are unwilling to hold their mahals under Kandarpa Das who is their enemy (Progs. G.G. in C. 30 Oct. 1777, B.S. 408-12, pp. 5333-8).

109. The Governor-General in Council on 16 February 1773 directs the Burdwan Council to take the assistance of the landholders in concluding the business of Pulbandi.

110. Revenue Board of the whole Council, 16 May 1774, R.B.P. 4990-91 ; O.C. 24 May, No. 4.



treasury and secret sources of income provoked agitation among the Zamindars.<sup>111</sup> The Zamindars applied to regain their right to collect duties on the market places and roads unless they would have to pay revenue running in debt.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, in the absence of proper pattas to the ryots a field was opened for the tenants to cheat the landlords and the farmers to oppress their ryots.<sup>113</sup> The aim of the Company was to protect the ryots from over-assessment of the farmer-Zamindars and to encourage them to peaceful cultivation. But by the very nature of the farming system the ryots' position became insecure leading to maximisation of rent. The policy of maximisation of revenue was the logical corollary of that of rent. But the ryots very often complained to the Council against the excess money demanded by the Zamindar as the Zamindars were denied customary rights of levying extra imposts.<sup>114</sup>

The firming system could not improve the system of tax collection. It proved oppressive both to the ryots and Zamindars. The introduction of this confused and baffling experiment brought with it an endless class of intermediaries like the farmers, securities, kutkinadars, agents etc. in the production sector, each claiming his shares of surplus value of the produce. It disturbed the system of collection with the result that the farmer could claim more than his due whereas the ryot in collusion with the patwaris could conceal the real demand. Tyranny, overassessment and concealment already rampant in the field now became a necessary part of the revenue system of the region.<sup>115</sup> It also gave a free hand to the gomasthas and patwaris as well as the naib-dewan and his associates. The

111. Rev. Board of the whole Council, 2 June, 1774, Midnapore R.B.P. 5194-5201 ; O.C. 7 June, 1774, No. 27.

112. Petition of Sheep Churn, Zamindar of Perugunnah Sayr Jait town, Midnapore, 2 June 1774 ; Progs. of Burd. Council of Rev.

113. Ibid, Mid. Collect. Rec. Room.

114. On 30 May 1774 the ryots of Patna Shamsundarpur of Pargana Kassijura complained of excess money demanded by the Zamindar Sundarnarayan as Salami. Ibid, Mid. Coll. Rec. Room.

115. Progs. G.G. in C., Vol. IV.

records are full of complaints against Governmental officials as well as against gomasthas of the farmers.<sup>116</sup> Interested persons made a complaint representing the extortion practised by the naib Diwan Chandra Sekhar Ghosh who practised extortion on the plea of Durbar expenses and prayed for the refund of the sums exacted by him.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, the Zamindar's officials could easily defraud the ryots by refusing proper pattas to their disadvantage. Very often the farmers could not realise money from the original producers which was eaten up by the intermediaries and therefore, they were often in arrears.<sup>118</sup> This led Philip Francis and his friends to think that the Zamindars should be recognised as the hereditary tax collectors of their estates.<sup>119</sup>

In spite of the failure of the experiment the authorities of the Company's government in India were not prepared to think of the Zamindars as the hereditary proprietors of the soil and in eagerness to work out the real value of the soil in absence of Kanungo-papers they appointed amins to investigate the affairs of revenue in this region. Therefore, in 1776 the Amini Commission was instituted to make an elaborate enquiry into the value of the lands, farmer's accounts and to give special attention to the problem of security of original producers. But the Amins very often committed extortion over the Zamindars. Sometimes the Zamindars were even flogged and imprisoned.<sup>120</sup>

### *The consequences of the farming system*

The confusion and corruption bred anarchy and the five

116. Progs. of G.G. in C. 1599-1605 ; O.C. No. 1, 7 June, 1776.

117. Rev. B. of the wh. Co., 6 Feb. 1776. G.G.P. 1647-54, O.C. 11 June 1776, No. 1.

118. Rev. B. of the Wh. Council, 2 June 1775 Burd. (G.G.P. 3292-3308, O.C. 11 July 1775, No. 7).

119. But Hastings turned down his advice and the farm was concluded with Kandarpa Das. G.G.P. 5333-41, No. 1, 2, 3 B.S. 408-12. Oct. 30, 1777, Nov. 18.

120. March 11, 1777, Fort William ; Progs. of the G.G. in C. B.S. 54-57, pp. 621-637.

years' farming system resulted in increased lawlessness in rural Bengal. By immemorial usage the Zamindars were responsible for all damages and losses which the people sustained from the activities of dacoits. From the 80's of the 18th century this principle was rendered innocuous by the decline of the nizamat authority in this frontier region. Moreover, with the refusal of the Company's Government to accept the local Zamindar's responsibility to maintain law and order of the country, in their attempt to resume nankar lands enjoyed by paik militia and by converting the hereditary proprietors of the soil into farmers of five years standing, they certainly gave a death blow to this age-old arrangement. It necessitated for Hastings and his Council to appoint foudars at different stations for the maintenance of peace. But this proved to be ineffective even in the settled areas as within this period refractory Zamindars, dispossessed paiks and discontented sardar-tahashildars became restless.

In October 1776, Jadu Singh, the Zamindar of Bogri committed outrages on the neighbouring Zamindaries of Roypur, Simlapal etc. as he was dispossessed from the power to collect tax directly from the ryots. The tahasildar of Bogri Nandalal Barat in utter bewilderment sought help of a detachment of 50 sepoys to arrest the rebel Zamindar Jadu Singh.<sup>121</sup> This only added fuel to the fire. There were the constant complaints of Bicont Doll of Ghatsila and this led Capt. Briscoe, the Officer Commanding the detachment of Ghatsila to advise that the rebel Zamindar Jagannath Dhal should be reinstated<sup>122</sup> and Higginson, the settlement Officer in the Jungle Mahals had to share his view. In the 80's of this century all the discontented Jungle Zamindars as well as their dispossessed armed retainers made a common cause to create havoc in the frontier

121. Rev. B. of the wh. Co., G.G.P. 4587-8, O.C. 25 Oct., 1776, No. 73.

122. 17 June 1776. Letter from the Prov. Comm. of Rev. at Burd. G.G.P. 4617-19; O.C. 1 Nov. 1776, No. 7.

regions. They were actively helped by Damodar Bhanja, the Raja of Mayurbhanj. Moreover, the Zamindars directly hindered the extensive survey-work undertaken by the British Revenue Officers. The confusion was worst confounded when a band of armed sannyasis also carried on depredations in Midnapore in 1773, in spite of the best endeavours of the Company's Government to check their onward march.

This was a period when the Company was at war with the Maratha Confederacy, against Hyder Ali of Mysore. Moreover, Hasting's extortions of the Begams of Oudh, his clash of opinion with Francis, and antagonism with Nandakumar had also complicated the picture. Naturally not the despair but the hope of seizing an opportune moment prompted the paik sardars to throw off the British yoke.

The disturbances in the western jungles were renewed by Subla Singh and many others including Kuilapal Jaghindar who was under the jurisdiction of the Zamindar of Ameyanagar, Samgunjun, the Sardar of Dhadki who was under Barabhum Zamindar and Jagannath Patra, Dompura Sardar who was under Ghatsila Zamindar. They refused to accept the authority of the Company, to settle revenue and to survey their possessions. Edward Baber, the Resident ordered Goodyar with two companies of Sepoys and a small field gun and a two pounder to march against "these rebellious free-booters". The Company was strengthened with a force of thousand paiks under Sitaram thanadar. The avowed object was to reduce them to subjection and to bring them to Midnapore for a speedy and favourable settlement.<sup>123</sup> Goodyar at first followed a conciliatory policy towards the rebels guarding himself from treachery. He arrived at Doomjura and built a strong fort for defence. Mangovin, the Silda Zamindar took up the task of a mediator. Jagannath Patra and Subla Singh agreed to come to terms with him but refused to come before him or to settle

123. Ed. Baber to Lt. Goodyar and Claud Russell and the Hon'ble John Cartier, Midnapore, 30 November 1770.

revenue-at Midnapore for fear of imprisonment. Then the British officials adopted a hectoring attitude towards the rebels.<sup>124</sup> Goodyar marched against Subla Singh's country and drove him out. They committed such excesses that the people in alarm fled away to the jungles. Goodyar was advised by subservient Ghatsila Raja to follow the divide and rule policy and to settle revenue with Subla's brother. Subla became desperate and joined with other rebels.<sup>125</sup>

Samgunjuns brother Tirboolam Singh (Tribhuban) and Duberaja, the eldest son of the Raja of Barabhum took possession of the Dulcune Ghat to entrap the Company's troops within the narrow pass. Samgunjuns brother offered assistance but for fear of treachery Goodyar refused his help. The rebels fled away. Jagannath Patra being afraid of expulsion from the country offered to submit at Narsingur. On 9 January 1771, Amar Singh, one of the associates of Subla Singh, surrendered before Goodyar. The paik coalition was broken and the loyal Ghatsila Raja regained the territory dominated by the expelled Subla. Samgunjun threatened Amar Singh's life for his treacherous surrender. Goodyar was determined to wreck vengeance on the ring leaders though the thanadar had to restrain his wrath.

Ed. Baber instructed Goodyar to build some police-stations in the disturbed parts of the Western Jungle Mahals and took caution in dealing with the rebels guarding against possible treachery. A skirmish took place with the Samgunjun's paiks in a jungle 4 cosses from Barabhum. The sepoy again became unruly. The villages were set on fire. Two paiks and two officer's servants were killed. The rebel paiks of Samgunjun fled away and other chiefs submitted to the Company. Samgunjun was at last "persuaded to come to his senses" and ultimately submitted.<sup>126</sup>

124. Goodyar to Ed. Baber, Doomjure, 3 January 1771.

125. Goodyar to Ed. Baber, 4 January 1771.

126. Lt. Goodyar's letter to Baber, Barabhum, 24 February 1771.

Though the Western jungle remained calm for a short time yet the Zamindars of bordering mahals of Burdwan rose in revolt. Durga Singh of Roypur, Mohan Das Choudhury of Bhalaidy, Sundarnarayan of Fulkusma refused to pay revenue and attacked the Company's police-station. In alarm the Jemadars of Balarampur thana sheltered the rebels. The Chowdhury of Kurrackpore refused to obey the Resident and Warren Hastings directed Edward Baber to keep him in confinement.<sup>127</sup> Charles Stewart, the resident of Burdwan requested Edward Baber to restrain the jemadars from assisting the rebels.<sup>128</sup> The revolts were, of course, for the time being crushed only to flare up again.

The uprisings took a serious turn when in February 1773 fresh disturbances broke out in the western jungles under the leadership of Jagannath Dhal of Ghatsila. He was reinforced by the rebel leaders who previously submitted to the Company. Edward Baber, the then Resident ordered Captain Forbes to join the advanced party of sepoys with two more companies. Forbes arrived at Narsingur on March 8, 1773. Taking alarm as usual, the ryots fled away and there was none within eight coss of Narsingur. The Company's sepoys set fire on the deserted houses. Jagannath Dhal took shelter with the Dompara sardar. In March 1773, Forbes received a letter from Tribhuban Singh offering his services with every particular information against Mangovin and the Bamanghati Zamindars who tried to make him a partisan of the rebels. Forbes was unable to accept his assistance for fear of possible treachery.<sup>129</sup> The ryots of Holdypooker joined hand with Jagannath and rose in revolt.

127. Governor-General and Council to Edward Baber, Fort William, 6 February 1773.

128. Charles Stewart to Edward Baber, Burdwan, 28 November 1772.

129. Capt. J. Forbes to Edward Baber, Narsingur, 6 March 1773.

Captain Forbes tried to cross the Subarnarekha to reach the rebel-country. They began to fire from the opposite side and filled Copergotte pass with trees. Naturally Forbes destroyed food grains and followed a searched-earth policy for a speedy surrender. The ryots were ready to offer terms but Forbes stoutly refused the offer. Bamanhatty Zamindar with the rebel Kripasindu submitted for a settlement before the Company. The Zamindar feared Jagannath Dhal. Forbes promised him support of the Company. By April 1773, Forbes hoped to lay hold of Jagannath Dhal by the assistance of Kripasindoo though he could not believe the later.<sup>130</sup> He also advised the higher authorities to depose the present helpless docile king of Ghatsila, Bicont Doll and to appoint the Company's own Collectors at Narsingur, Colianpore and Holdypooker.

By May 1773, Jagannath Dhal remained as menacing as ever,<sup>131</sup> and those who submitted, again revolted. Forbes marched to the pass that lead from Holdypooker to Bamanghati and reached Teera, a Maratha territory. The Raja of Bamanhatty was taken prisoner and with him the mother of Jagannath who helped her son with money. Mayurbhanj Raja was asked to take charge of Bamanhatty and Coochung. The imprisoned mother of Jagannath was compelled to send a letter to her son to submit before the British officials to save the honour and life of his family.

Still the obstinate dispossessed remained unbending. The paiks of Dompara headed by Mangovin, the Zamindar of Silda were encouraged to commit depredations. The expected surrender of Zamindars did not take place and Forbes was detained to uproot these "nest of chiefs". Three Sardars namely, Colapater, Mohan Singh and Lukhin Degwar were imprisoned, as they refused to pay revenue but agreed to render their service for fighting.<sup>132</sup> Unable to understand

130. Capt. J. Forbes from Holdypooker, 4 April 1773.

131. Capt. J. Forbes from Narsingur, May 1773.

132. Forbes to Lewis, Holdypooker, 30 May 1773.

their contention Captain Forbes marched to Dompara. The people in alarm after firing a number of matchlocks and arrows ran off to the hill with a terrible noise. Jagannath Patra, the sardar of Dompara was reported to have fled to settle in Manbhoom with his family. The Cockparrow Zamindar and other Sardars who were with Jagannath, submitted and settled revenue with Forbes.

He undertook statistics of previous payment and an account of what they were able to pay for the next year. Cantonments of half a battalion strength were also stationed at Holdypooker and Narsingur. Mangovin, the Silda Zamindar, who was once a mediator against the rebel sardars had now thrown off his loyalty to the Company and was the principal promoter of the trouble. He being the father-in-law of Jagannath Dhal supplied him with men and money. Forbes, therefore, sent an army against him. The news of success of the Company made Lewis, the Resident, jubilant. He expected that as the paiks usually paid the mathot, the Tahasildars would be able to collect enhanced revenues from them. The sardar-paiks as well as Holdypooker Choudhury and his people would execute bond to settle revenue with the Ghatsila Raja.

The renewed vigour of the paiks prompted Lewis to reinforce Forbes in the Mahals. He ordered Hawkins to march to Holdypooker on 13 August, 1773. Bicont Dall, the then Zamindar of Ghatsila at Narsingur was alarmed at the prospect of paik rising. But Forbes imprisoned Dasspannee, the late Dewan of Jagannath.<sup>133</sup> Jagannath entrenched himself in an impregnable fortress, a few coss from Dompara and assassinated every 'harkara' who attempted to go there.<sup>134</sup> Hawkins, the commanding officer at Dompara imprisoned Naddu Pathak, the late 'Dewan' of Jagannath Patra who offered his services to Bicont Dhal, on suspicion of espionage. Heskeit replaced Hawkins. But before his arrival Dompara Sardar Patra,

133. Lewis to Hawkins, Midnapore, 13 August 1773.

134. Hawkins to Lewis, Holdypooker, 27 September 1773.



Mangovin and Sundarnarayan plundered the estates of Bicont Dhal and escaped with money and about 300 heads of cattle.<sup>135</sup> The Dompapa paiks proved menacing to the Company. Heskett gave way to Lt. Taylor but the disturbed country completely suspended payment of revenue.<sup>136</sup> Lt. Smith, Officer Commanding at Holdypooker, received information that an officer and a number of sepoys were killed about fifteen coss from Holdypooker and their baggages were plundered.

In early 1774 Jagannath again broke out, carried out hostile operations on a wider scale. Sidney Smith, Commanding at Holdypooker reported to the Resident of Midnapur on 10 April, 1774, that the devastations committed by Jagannath with his men were of such a nature that they called for drastic military operations. Lt. Smith had to confront the guerrilla warfare of the whole bands of paiks in the Mahals. Being harassed and at last alarmed he requested Lewis to reinforce him with a company of sepoys and a field gun.<sup>137</sup>

But the Officer-in-Command's expectations were not fulfilled. The situation grew worse by the middle of May, when the Commander was apprehending the danger even of the detachment being cut off, as the hill people in the whole area were determined to drive out sepoys from every part of the country. At last he came to the conclusion that—

“unless Jagannath Dhal is subdued the Hon'ble Company can never receive an anna from this side of the Subarnarekha... ..unless he is made Raja he will never cease destroying this country with fire and sword.”<sup>138</sup>

The European Collectors were recalled to Midnapore and an attempt was made to come to a compromise with Jagannath.

135. Lt. Henry R. Heskett to Lewis, Narsingur, 12 November 1773.

136. Lt. William Check Taylor to Lewis, Camp Narsingur, 1773.

137. T. Sidney Smith to S. Lewis, Holdypooker, 10 April 1774.

138. Sidney Smith to S. Lewis, Holdypooker, 6 May 1774.

After pacification of Ghatsila, rebellion broke out in Manbhum. J. Dunn was sent to Manbhum to curb independence of the headman and to demolish his forts.<sup>139</sup> Vansittart, the Resident, promised a person to settle with him the Zamin-dary of Manbhum but he was forcibly driven out. Dunn asked the headman to come before him to settle revenue. On his refusal, he was arrested and sent as a prisoner to Midnapore. The British collector took over the charge of the estate and the claimant was asked to prove his right before the Resident in person<sup>140</sup>.

The British Officials could not carry on survey-work uninterruptedly. The paiks opposed Capt. Carter who was employed to survey in the north and west of Midnapore.<sup>141</sup> He always moved about with a large detachment of Sepoys. But on the way he was robbed of Rs. 8000/-, paid to him to defray expenses of his sepoy. In March, 1774, Lt. Call was employed in the survey of the lands proceeding from Barabhum to the western part of Bengal. He had two companies of sepoy with him under Lt. Young. After leaving Ambikanagar at the village of Sogeron the party was confronted with a number of turbulent paiks. Quite against the traditional custom, the Barabhum Raja sent no supply of food and provision and imprisoned the messenger. After a protracted struggle day and night they reached near a tank. The Manbhum Raja receiving news sent some gains. He had to fire about 40 rounds at the turbulent paiks. His ammunition was exhausted. After a considerable loss of men and money they were compelled to change their route to Narsingur.

#### *Army operations against unsettled areas*

Beyond the settled areas extreme lawlessness reigned

139. J. Dunn to S. Lewis, Manbhum, 27 September 1773.

140. Ibid, 23 November 1773.

141. Edward Baber to the Hon'ble John Cartier, President and Governor, Midnapore, 12 February 1772.

supreme which necessitated army operations. Naturally in December 1774, Capt. Crawford was deputed to undertake an army operation against the state of Patkum. He occupied the capital and certain other strongholds of Patkum on 15 December.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, Capt. Briscoe carried on army operations against the Raja of Barabhum and his chiefs for their refractory conduct. The Raja was deposed and his son was recommended to be the king of Barabhum.<sup>143</sup>

In the rainy season the army battalion was stationed at a safe place and from Roghunath Narayan, the son of the deposed Raja of Barabhum, all the arrears of revenue due to the Government were realised.<sup>144</sup> But the unhealthy climate of the region forced Briscoe to retire to Midnapore to save the morale and health of his men.<sup>145</sup> Before 28 April, 1775, Capt. Crawford after a successful operation in the Patkum district returned to Jhalda and was compelled to arrange for the collection of such tribute as the country could afford after the war.<sup>146</sup> He was asked to join Capt. Browne in the Panchet Camp because its Zamindar Jagannath Deo had revolted against the Company's Government. But the rebel Zamindar escaped from Deopur and took possession in the territories of the Raja of Birbhum. The said Raja was ordered not to give shelter to the rebel but the spirit of the rebel could not be crushed. Within a year in September 1776, the Patkum Raja again protested against the over-assessment of his lands and rose in revolt. Crawford deputed an amin to estimate the produce of the lands belonging to the Raja of Patkum. At the same

142. Rev. B. of the Whole Council, 15 Dec. 1774. R.B.P. 6753-54 ; O.C. 30 Dec. 1774, No. 36.

143. G.G.P. 2280-86 ; O.C. 29 May 1775, No. 40.

144. 28 June 1775, Camp Manbhum, Letter from Capt. H. Briscoe to Lt. Gen. J. Clavering, G.G.P. 3329-34, O.C. 18 June, No. 1.

145. G.G.P. 3334-35, O.C. 18 July 1775, No. 2.

146. G.G.P. 4475-79, O.C. 19 September, No. 1, Letter from Crawford at Camp Jhalda, 28 April 1775.

time the number of troops under Crawford at Jhalda was increased.<sup>147</sup> Reports of a skirmish with the 11th battalion under Capt. Delafield of certain free-booters under Jagannath Dhal in Ghatsila was also received with astonishment. The rebels carried on extensive guerrilla warfare in the little known hilly and jungly parts of Ghatsila making unbearable the life of Bicont Dhal who demanded peremptory succour from the Company's Government. At last in October, 1776, the Governor-General in Council decided to send H. Higginson, Chief of the Provincial Council of Revenue at Burdwan to form a settlement with the Zamindar of Ghatsila in order to put a stop to the dispute between Jagannath and Bicont Dhal.<sup>148</sup> Capt. Briscoe, the Army Officer stationed at Ghatsila to help Bicont Dhal, was of opinion that in the rainy season it was impossible to carry on punitive measures against the rebel and that Jagannath should be reinstated, otherwise no revenue could be collected by the Government Tahasildars.<sup>149</sup> The Government at last listened to the advice and the estate of Ghatsila was permanently settled on Jagannath at an assessment of Rs. 4,267/-. Bicont Dhal was granted some jagirs and he was satisfied with it. It is difficult to agree with the view that "the rebellion of the Ghatsila Raja is an illustration of baronial resistance to the growth of British paramountcy in Bengal".<sup>150</sup> This finds support from what Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri had stated that "the part played by the people in this struggle does not bear the impress of Zamindary promptings altogether".<sup>151</sup> The reinstatement of Jagannath Dhal in February 1777, was a turning point

147. Letter from Crawford to Lt. Gen. J. Clavering, C-in-C., 30 Sept. Jhalda in Panchet, G.G.P. 4192-4, O.C. 15 October 1776, No. 3.

148. Minute of the Governor-General, 25 October, Fort William, G.G.P. 4381-2, O.C. 25 October 1776, No. 10.

149. G.G.P. 4617-19, O.C. 1 November 1776, No. 7; Letter from the Prov. Council of Rev. at Burdwan, R.B.W.C., 17 June 1776, Burdwan.

150. Chaudhuri, S. B., *Civil Disturbances etc.*, p. 56.

151. Chaudhuri, S. B., *Ibid*, p. 56.

in the history of the Jungle Mahals. The local chiefs became more turbulent and the Company's Government became conciliatory. The Mayurbhanj Raja so long a passive spectator began actively to assist the rebel Zamindars. The Zamindar of Bogri Jadu Singh was dispossessed for arrears of revenue and his lands were given over to tahasildars for revenue collection. In protest Jadu Singh with his paik Sardars began to commit depredations on the neighbouring Rajas of Raipur and Simlapal. Even the tahasildar Nandalal Barat asked for a detachment of 50 sepoys to arrest Jadu Singh.<sup>152</sup> Jadu Singh was eventually deposed and his son was given the farm of Bogri. Higginson submitted his report of revenue settlement with the jungle Zamindars. Capt. Crawford was appointed in February 1776, to take over the charge of the collection of revenue from the petty Zamindars of Panchet. W. Hewett was at the same time directed to assist Crawford who shortly proceeded to bring under subjection the Zamindars bordering on Panchet.<sup>153</sup> The Raja of Patkum in 1775 again had withheld payment of his revenue but after the arrival Crawford, Commanding at Jhalda, early in 1776 received him with every mark of submission and reported that his failure to pay revenue was due to bad harvest and not to his unwillingness to pay it. Crawford rose equal to the need of the time and place and recommended a lowering of assessment. Philip Francis was of opinion that a small amount of honorary tribute may be fixed on condition that the Zamindars and Sardars of the place would be responsible for any disturbance in that part of the frontier.<sup>154</sup> No doubt, Francis' learned opinion was thrown to the winds but the tribute was minimised.

From 1777 to 1786 the fortunes of the English in India and outside had fallen to their lowest water-mark. As Sir Alfred

152. G.G.P. 4587-8, O.C. 29 October 1776, No. 73.

153. Letter from the Prov. Com. of Rev. at Burd. to W. Hewett, 2 Nov. 1776, Burd. G.G.P. 5738-9, O.C. 24 December 1776, No. 2.

154. Prog. G.G. in C. 3219-20, B.S. 270-5, No. 19, Feb. 27, 1777.

Lyall remarks England was fighting with her back to the wall being engaged in hostilities at one and the same time with France, Spain and Holland and the rebel American colonies. There was the danger of possible French intervention in India.

The inevitable military operations in India in the early 80's brought financial ruin to the Company. Hastings ultimately fell back upon the usual policy of extortion and oppression of the native Zamindars, to fill up his empty pocket. His ill-behaviour towards the Begams of Oudh, and Chait Singh of Benaras, has been subjected to serious criticism by the contemporary and later historians. He supported the dynastic pretensions of the Bhonsles to safeguard their interests in the Jungle Mahals which was contiguous to the Bhonsle's dominions in Orissa.<sup>155</sup> The revenue administration in the jungle and nimki mahals though of first importance also was in a mess.

In the meantime Monson, a member of the Governor-General's Council had died and the Governor-General recovered his lost authority in the Council. Naturally he favoured the idea of a lasting settlement which was a prime necessity.<sup>156</sup> From 1773 to 1781 the Government had followed the policy of centralisation by the creation of a controlling Committee of Revenue at Calcutta with Six Provincial Councils. Collectors were abolished and a body of native amils was appointed to extract revenue as fixed in the previous years. Warren Hastings himself agreeing with the claims of the Zamindars in preference to farmers advised the creation of a Court of Provincial Council to ascertain in detail the resources of the country before the terms of settlement should be fixed. The controversy brought into prominence the question of the ownership of the land. While Hastings and Barwell assumed that the sovereign possessed the land, Francis and his school championed

155. Wills, G. U., *British relations with Nagpur state in the 18th century*, Nagpur, 1926, p. 47.

156. Letter to L. Sullivan and also to J. Graham, 26 September 1776.

that the Zamindar was the real owner and not a hereditary tax officer of the sovereign.

The five years' lease expired in April 1777. But no plan in the meantime could be formulated. Lands began to be let out annually to Zamindars and in 1781 the land revenue was increased by twenty-six lakhs. The period from 1781 to 1786 saw the completion of centralisation. In December 1780, Francis sailed for Europe making clear the field for Hastings. His adversaries "had sickened, died and fled".<sup>157</sup> Hastings tenaciously endeavoured to centralise the collection-system. The Committee of Revenue was placed in full control aided by a Diwan. Provincial Councils were abolished and Collectors were appointed in each district. The Superintendship of the Khalsa were abolished and its functions transferred to the Committee of Revenue. The Zamindars were encouraged to pay revenue direct into the Khalsa or Exchequer at Calcutta. Kanungoes were reappointed to assist the Collectors with the full charge of their works. But the claim of Sadar Kanungoes to appoint their own deputies was very soon contested by the Collector of Midnapore who pointed out that the Committee of Circuit had ordered the registration of all Deputy Kanungoes as servants of the Company.<sup>158</sup>

*The period after 1777—Relapse into annual settlement*

These fluctuations told heavily upon the people and more particularly upon the Zamindars. After 1777 the Zamindars were restored to their possessions but not to their hereditary rights. They were now bound to give pattas to the ryots and forbade to levy extra taxes not included in the Jamma. Even they were not to demand any former balances disapproved by the Government. But the authorities in their eagerness to

157. Gleig, G. R., *Memoirs of the life of Rt. Hon. Warren Hastings*, First Governor-General of Bengal, Vol. 2, London, 1841, pp. 329-330.

158. Progs. Committee of Rev., 12 Sept., 17 Sept., 8 Nov., 1781.

maximise the revenue retained the gross jamma fixed during the farming period. So the noticeable feature of the period was over assessment as it was wrongly admitted that "the farming system led to a more correct estimate of the value of lands".<sup>159</sup> This compelled the Zamindars to grant leases to the banians who lent them money. Impoverishment of the Zamindars reached so acute a stage that difficulty was also experienced in the absence of securities to discharge their Jamma punctually. The land revenue demand, no doubt, was beyond the capacity of the soil. Moreover, previously in many cases farmers and patwaris had granted lands at a low rate to the ryots on temporary agreements or at a fixed rent, many of which were confirmed by Government leading inevitably to the diminution of rent. Moreover, cheapness of grains' market-value was a serious blow both to the original producers and proprietors of the soil. The Zamindars found it increasingly difficult to retain possession over their ancient estates by bidding for them as annual farmers against a host of speculators and money-lenders.<sup>160</sup> Shore had ruthlessly expressed in his minute of 1782, the inefficiency of the whole system.<sup>161</sup> R. C. Dutt draws lurid picture of the unhappy state of the three largest estates in Bengal i.e., Burdwan, Rajsahi and Dinajpur which were administered by three distinguished ladies.<sup>162</sup> Plenty of records, as collected by Hunter, show that the Zamindars were subjected to all sorts of humiliations and even dispossession from property. The anti-Zamindary policy of the Company was illustrated when Narahari Choudhury, Zamindar of Karrackpore was charged with open defiance

159. Progs. G.G.C., Vol. 96, MacPherson.

160. Annual Register (1784-85), p. 65 also S. B. Chaudhury, *Op.cit.*, pp. 15-16.

161. Harington, F. H., *An Analysis of the Laws and Regulations enacted by the Governor-General in Council at Fort William, Bengal*, Vol. 2, London 1821, pp. 41-3.

162. Romesh Dutt, *Econ. Hist. etc.*, pp. 61-62.



of the British authority. From the letter of Resident Edward Baber to Hastings (10 January, 1773) it appears that his fort was invaded but the Zamindar escaped. He was ultimately disposed and deprived of his inheritance.<sup>163</sup>

*Period of determination—Demands for a permanent settlement*

Naturally demands were made for the revision of assessment. The Zamindars could have been granted redress in two ways: (1) either by granting them moshaira stipend or (2) by deduction of a portion of jumma. But the Governor-General in Council was unsympathetic to the condition of the Zamindars as they could afford redress only for losses occasioned by the "unlicensed assumption of the patitabad talukdars."<sup>164</sup> To the Supreme Court established in 1774 many cases came up for decision concerning the rights of Zamindars but they did not try to ascertain whether a Zamindar was the hereditary tax-officer or the owner of the soil.

The confusion reached its climax when an uncalled for quarrel broke out between the judiciary and the executive. The Board of Revenue contended that the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction over the Zamindars but this was contested by the judiciary. Raja Sundar Narayan was dispossessed of Kassijora pargana by his security Kasinath Babu as the former was immersed heavy in debt.<sup>165</sup> The Raja prayed for adjustment of his debt with his revenue. But before this could be finalised on 30 November 1778, a sheriff's officer with a large number of armed men forcibly took possession of the Zamindar's properties. The Raja complained bitterly of the violation of his zenana and of his religion and the Governor-General in Council protested against the Supreme Court on

163. Price, J. C., Notes on the Hist. of Mid., pp. 141-44.

164. Progs. G.G. in C., Vols. 50-51.

165. Translation of a petition from Sundar Narayan, B.S. 24-8, pp. 516-17, No. 14, G.G.P. Jan. 2, 1778, Fort William.

the plea that it had no jurisdiction over the Zamindars. If they were to be subjected to the process of the Court the revenue must receive great detriment.<sup>166</sup> Later on, it was of course, decided that Sundar Narayan should pay his debt to Kashinath Babu in three instalments.<sup>167</sup>

Even the Court of Directors sent contradictory directions and officially did not encourage very much the abatement of revenue to the impoverished Zamindars. There was confusion among the Company's local officers regarding their sphere of jurisdiction. The judge of the Midnapore Diwani Adalat had under him the police of the town and bazars of Midnapore. But Peiarce, the Collector in opposition stationed the paiks and peons in different places of Midnapore under the impression that the Zamindar's rights of maintaining local police were vested in the Collector who had recently taken over charge of the Zamindari of Rani Shiromani of Karnagarh. But in a letter to the Committee of Revenue it was made clear that "the police administration of the town and bazars of Midnapore shall be wholly and exclusively vested in the judge of the Midnapore Diwani Adalat as appertaining to his faujdari jurisdiction ; that the Zamindari paiks and peons established for these purposes will accordingly be under his control and that the Collector shall not interfere in anything except collection of rents of the bazars".<sup>168</sup> The resolution of the Governor-General in Council was, of course, binding upon the Collector but this singular case of confusion in respect of jurisdiction of local officers in a period when the Nizamat had fast declined helped to spread commotion in the area.<sup>169</sup>

166. Gleig, *Op cit.*, Vol. II, p. 244 ; Forrest, *Selections from the State Papers of the Governor-Generals of India : Warren Hastings*, Vol. I, Oxford, 1910, p. 201.

167. G.G.P., Aug. 4, 1778, Fort William, B.S. 213-19, pp. 3357-60, No. 15.

168. G.G.P., November 6, Fort William, 1781, B.S. 392, No. 18.

169. In pursuance of his duty Bird handed over some discharged servants to the Rani for which Peiarce, the Collector protested, as he was

The responsibility of the Zamindars for the preservation and repair of embankments as mentioned in their sanads was practically rendered futile as they could not collect from the ryots an additional cess for poolbundy. Contract offered by the Company's Government for the repair of embankments led to many abuses. On the otherhand, examples were not wanting that repair of bunds were entrusted to the Zamindar "as they have been wholly neglected by his officers".<sup>170</sup> But the greatest dislocation in the existing system was manifested in the responsibility for maintaining internal peace. The obligation of police duties assigned to Zamindars was kept in cold storage. They undertook to maintain peace and were still responsible for the robberies committed in their estates. But in practice such thanadars and paiks as were maintained by them did not receive allowance nor could they enjoy non-revenue paying land-tenure.<sup>171</sup> Hastings tried to establish an alternative faujdari system on the ruins of the declined nizamat. But very few faujdari stations were actually established and in the Jungle Mahals two thanas at Balarampur and Jaunpur proved utterly incapable to maintain peace in the south-west frontier of Bengal during this formative period of the British Rule.

During these precarious years of existence of British rule in India the Jungle Mahals presented a picture of unrest and anarchy. The economic condition of the original producers became tormenting. Utmost oppression was practised in the collection of Zamindar's demand by his tax-agents though the receipts seldom amounted to much more than one-half of the

inclined to try them in his own court. Thus refractory elements in this area took opportunity of this confusion of jurisdiction of the local officers and spread violence in the area to utter incapacity of the Company's officials (September 29, 1781 ; Letter from S. Bird, Judge of the Diwani Adalat to the Governor-General in Council).

170. Progs. of G.G. in C., Fort William, 8 July 1784, Letter from the Resident of Burdwan, 17 March 1784.

171. This could be illustrated from the story of Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh. On the plea of bad management and arrears of revenue

demand.<sup>172</sup> Families ruined by famine, dispossessed by revenue agents, were thrown into the country-side as roving bands living by plunder, and extorting blackmail from the surrounding villages. This example was shown to them by the Maratha bargirs and the bands of so-called sannyasis in the early 70's of this century. The new method of distribution of 'Pattas' for arranging Zamabandy, dispossessed many ryots. Consequently a new class of land-owners came into existence. This system of pattas, or leases completely failed to protect the ryot.<sup>173</sup> New owners of lands together with the Company's officials became the immediate target of the dispossessed paiks.

Reinstatement of Jagannath Dhal prompted Jadu Singh, the old Zamindar of Bogri to rise against the Company's revenue authorities who refused payment of revenue to his

her Zamindari was taken away. She was entitled to a moshaira. Naturally this involved disbandment of her paik-militia which led to serious opposition from her people. In this period of confusion the Collector Peiarce pretended to have the authority over her militia whereas Bird, the Judge of the Adalat assumed the faujdari authority of the Zamindars. The quarrel broke out between the two officers when the Judge in pursuance of his faujdari authority handed over some recalcitrant discharged servants of the Rani to her for realising misappropriated money. Eventually Peiarce had to climb down due to express order from the Governor-General in Council. But it threatened peace of the country. Gradually the disbanded paiks took upperhand and the Rani with her Naibs Sitaram Khan and Chunilal Khan maintained a precarious possession over the Zamindari. For a time the rebel sardars wanted to make the Rani their leader but the Rani, though secretly sympathised with the rebels, was not in a mood to antagonise the Company's Government. She could not long maintain her neutrality when in the 90's the inevitable clash between the paiks and the Government reached its climax.

172. From the letter written from the Provincial Council of Rev. at Burdwan it is known that the Kali Prasad Singh, Diwan to the Raja of Burdwan was imprisoned for balances of revenue due from the Raja of Burdwan and their balances of revenue for Magh 1185. Progs. G.G. in C. (G.G.P. February 25, 1779), pp. 1236-7, O.C. No. 26.

173. G.G.P. Letter from the Burdwan Council, 18 April 1777.

over-lord, the Raja of Burdwan. The Provincial Council of Revenue proposed "to pay his revenue direct to the Government instead of paying the same to the Raja of Burdwan".<sup>174</sup> The proposal was, however, turned down but early in 1779 Lieut. Long had to conduct an expedition with the result that Jadu Singh was dispossessed and his son Chhatra Singh was reinstated. Lt. Long held possession of the pargana to extricate arrears of revenue from the farm.<sup>175</sup> But the request for abatement or reduction of revenue of the Bogri pargana was turned down on the plea that it would create bad precedent.<sup>176</sup> Naturally, the protracted clash of arms continued throughout the 80's while the Zamindars of Mayurbhunj, and Panchet and many other small landed proprietors joined hands with Jadu Singh to commit depredations in the neighbouring areas.<sup>177</sup>

The period also marked the complete break-down of law and order. News poured in from the Collector of Midnapore to the Governor-General in Council that frontier Zamindars had become restless. On 25 September 1779, the Provincial Council of Revenue reported the hostile conduct of Durjan Singh, Zamindar of Raipur, a pargana contiguous to Bogri which necessitated military intervention under Lt. Long. The Rani of Burdwan was directed to take over charge of revenue collection of Raipur. In November 1779, order was restored. Durjan Singh escaped to the jungles and Arjun Singh, his uncle promised to produce the rebel before the Court and the Provincial Council of Revenue had to draw attention of the

174. G.G.P. December 14, 1778, B.S. 21-8, p. 525-7, No. 7.

175. Letter from Prov. Com. of Rev. at Burdwan to the G.G. in C. March 15, 1779, Burdwan, G.G.P. 1713-15, No. 32, B.S. 103-9.

176. Letter to the Prov. Com. of Rev. at Burdwan, July 6, Fort William, 1779 G.G.P. B.S. 174-8. As if bad precedent was not created in the case of reinstatement of Jagannath Dhal in Ghatsila.

177. In a letter from T. Short at Bogri to Major J. Buchanan, Officer Commanding at Camp near Midnapore, explaining that "at least five complete companies are necessary at Bogri to subdue the chuars and other disturbers of peace."

Supreme Board to the expediency of wholly pardoning all the persons concerned in the disturbances at Raipur. Reports also came that some of the people of Josodanandan, Zamindar of Tirkunchor, in Jaleswar district, had committed depredations in the Maratha territories of Orissa. The Zamindar was dispossessed and his brother Debinandan was recommended for the estate with a sanad. Later on, of course, on pleading innocence of the dispossessed Zamindar, the Governor-General-in-Council reinstated him in his Zamindary.<sup>178</sup>

Disturbances broke out in November, 1780, in the Zamindary of Panchet, and an army was sent to Jhalda.<sup>179</sup> Another problem spot was the Midnapore Zamindary of Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh. Under the direct supervision of Peiarce, the Collector of Midnapore, its revenue was collected. She was asked to furnish a list of servants and paiks whom she maintained. Rani Shiromoni had to encounter opposition from the Collector when Bird, the Judge handed over some of her discharged servants like Ratan Singh, Ranjit Mahapatra and Ram Singh for proper punishment.

In June 1781, Ram Mohan Ray, 'sezewal' of Bishnupur could not collect taxes from Rajhat and according to his prayer L. Mercer, Judge of the Diwani Adalat at Rajhat was asked to station sepoy's at the place to prevent robberies and other acts of violence from adjacent countries otherwise no revenue could be collected. Thus by the 80's of the century Judges of the Diwani Adalats took over the faujdari obligations of the Zamindars and the Collectors their obligations regarding revenue administration. This was a deliberate policy of the Company to weaken the Zamindars, at last to wipe them out

178. G.G.P., July 25, 1781, B.S. 17-24, p. 161-4, No. 15.

179. It rapidly spread in the Patkum area in the middle of 1783. Major Crawford led an expedition to suppress the disturbances created in Patkum by plunderers hailing from Singhbhum, Barabhum and Tomar and reduced the people to subjection by taking large number of them as prisoners (G.G.P. 1783, April 25, Jhalda, Letter from Maj. Crawford to the Com. of Rev.).

of the production-sector. Above all, the Company still fostered the idea that as the Zamindars were the hereditary tax-collectors, in default of their duties their rights-at-will could be escheated.

*Agrarian disturbances after 1780*

The official letters of correspondence contain graphic picture of the disturbances which took place after 1780. In 1780 one Rudra Bauri with the Dhalbhum people plundered the inhabitants of Bishnupur. The faujdar of Bishnupur was overpowered.<sup>180</sup> The Collector of Midnapore on 30 January 1782, informed Hastings that a serious situation had cropped up in the Jungle Mahals. Disturbances broke out in Balarampur and Karnagarh. The troops stationed under Capt. Vincent took every step to quell the ryots and sent the prisoners to Midnapore for trial. The rebel leaders Bansuram Baxy (Banchcharam) and Sitaram Khan of Karnagarh were sent for trial. Rani Shiromoni of Karnagarh was always sympathetic to her paiks, the disgruntled cultivators and artisans of Anandapur and neighbouring factories. A list of her employees who had joined the revolt was drawn to fix the responsibility of the Zamindar in the disturbance. Most of the British officials were engaged in the Deccan warfare. Naturally the Governor-General and the Council were anxious to avoid any heavy engagement with the rebel leaders and to concentrate their energy in crushing Tipu Sultan and the French bid for supremacy in India through Mysore. They naturally temporised, and fell back upon the policy of diplomacy in order to detach the new owners of lands, offering them pattahs by uprooting the hereditary but impoverished peasant militia from the 'nankar' lands.<sup>181</sup> This was done with the avowed object of

180. Bahadur Ali Khan's letter to the Chief of Burdwan Council, 15 January 1780.

181. Hunter, Sir William Wilson, Bengal M.S. Records, London, 1894, No. 1431.

the enhancing crop production and the simultaneous revenue collection which was urgently necessary in the war-fronts of India.

The Zamindars were ordered to bring the offenders under Lex and were in vain entrusted with the obligation to maintain peace and tranquillity in the locality. In the case of negligence of this police duty they were threatened with expulsion.<sup>182</sup> Hastings wrote in September 1781 to the Collector to ascertain the amount of revenue-free lands and to report how far the Zamindars kept required number of paiks for which they enjoyed rent-reduction.<sup>183</sup> This survey-work ultimately led to the passing of Regulation XXII of 1793 and the policy of resumption of rent-free lands which brought the climax of the Chuar and Paik Rebellion in the Jungle Mahals as depicted by Price. The higher officials were at least convinced that the Zamindars did not keep the required number of paiks for which they enjoyed exemption from rent. On the other hand, they actively participated in revolts with their disbanded but impoverished paik militia. New police-stations were established, and Panchet with Jhalda was given a separate Collector. Rani Shiromoni was asked to keep up the usual number of people for the public service.

In November 1782, Major Crawford was despatched to Jhalda in Manbhum in order to quiet the disturbers.<sup>184</sup> But due to preoccupations of the Company's troops in the Deccan, the Collector followed a cautious and calculated policy. Even the Zamindar of Panchet was exposed to daily depredations from the mahals of Jhalda due to lack of adequate sepoy. The Zamindars of Nayagarh and Jira too plundered the neigh-

182. From the Committee of Revenue to John Pelarce, Collector of Midnapore, Calcutta, 22 July 1782.

183. Wheeler etc. to Peiarce, 18 Sept., 1781.

184. Letters from Governor-General and the Council to the Revenue Committee, 28 Nov., 1782.



bouring villages<sup>185</sup> and withheld their rent in November 1782. Major Crawford succeeded in crushing the unrest of Jhalda and Mangal Shah, its Zamindar surrendered on condition of his life being spared. The sympathetic revolt in Jharia was quelled and the peoples were disarmed. The paik rebellion took place also in south Panchet and the conflagration spread to Bogri pargana. In September 1783 Capt. Gill was directed to send a company of sepoys to Bogri to curb the disturbances.<sup>186</sup> The Jaigirdars of Coliapal once more took the field and his Jaagir became a place of refuge for the runaway paiks. The riotous paiks of Bogri were dispersed and Chhatra Singh fled away to the neighbouring pargana. In October, 1783, a battalion of sepoys was posted to quell the Balarampur disturbances as well as to seize Chhatra Singh.<sup>187</sup> The people of Tomar surrendered on condition that they should not be sent to Midnapore for trial. Major Crawford wisely adopted the policy of moderation to restore tranquillity in the mahals when the Company had concentrated their energy in the Deccan. The strongholds were demolished and the people disarmed. The aggrieved Mayurbhanj Raja was not slow to assist the Bogri Raja in raising a force in Hariharpur to attack the Company's troops.<sup>188</sup> The Panchet Raja arrested the old Zamindar of Bogri and also his turbulent son Chhatra Singh. The old Raja, of course, died in a very short time due to shock for his complete incapacity. It is interesting to relate the situation at Mysore with the conditions of the Jungle Mahals of Midnapore. The power of Tipu was crushed in 1784. The Company was now free to handle and deal effectively with

185. From the Collector of Panchet to the Committee of Revenue, 7 November 1782.

186. Letter to Capt. Gill from the Committee of Revenue, 22 Sept., 1783.

187. Letter from the Committee of Revenue to the Collector of Midnapore, 13 Oct., 1783.

188. Letter from Dynely the Collector of Midnapore to the Committee of Revenue, 25 Nov., 1783.

the contumacious jungle chiefs. Eighteen military chiefs or naiks were forced to surrender and were sent to Calcutta for trial. A date was fixed for the surrender of Chhatra Singh. This stern attitude of the Company stiffened the necks of the insurgents. The Zamindar of Simlapal etc. suspending revenue-payment encouraged the ryots to rise against the Company. Capt. Hamilton attacked the insurgents of Bogri in their retreat at Coliapal. He was authorised to receive "submission of those who were desirous of returning to obedience except from Kosil Patra, Madan Digar and Bhag Rai". The Zamindar of Coliapal with his family was arrested and Chhatra Singh voluntarily surrendered. He was kept in confinement for a trial in spite of solemn promise of the Captain to make him free. He was not allowed to possess Taraf Villa for his residence. The Collector of Midnapore pleaded leniency for Subal Singh to keep him as a hostage for the good behaviour of his sons and relations. Other ring leaders were sent for trial to the faujdari court at Midnapore.

In 1783, the Cultivators of Birbhum submitted a petition setting forth their grievances.<sup>189</sup> And towards the end of 1785, Foley was appointed to investigate into their complaints.<sup>190</sup> Already the people took the situation in their own hands and adopted the policy of direct action. As a precaution in 1787, Lord Cornwallis united Birbhum and Bishnupur into a compact British district. Paye was appointed there to combat the growth of lawlessness. Sherburne succeeded Paye but in spite of his stern rule the treasury was sacked and the insurgents carried off more than three thousand pounds of silver.<sup>191</sup> On distribution leaves (pattas) by the Collector of Birbhum on 30 July 1788, to the ryots, the mandals assembled a number of

189. Hunter, *Bengal MSS. Records* Nos. 452, 493. Quoted by S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances etc.*, pp. 65-66.

190. Hunter, *Ibid*, No. 1119.

191. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, p. 17. Vide S. B. Chaudhuri, *Ibid*, pp. 65-66.

ryots and incited them into an insurrection vowing that they would not submit to the Jammabandy.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, the Government as usual threatened the Zamindar of Bishnupur with dispossession of his estate if the amount of his balance was not paid within three days.<sup>193</sup> In October 1788, the unrestrained insurgents resacked the treasury while Keating took charge of the district. In February 1789, the hillmen broke through the cordon of outposts en masse and created panic in the neighbourhood.<sup>194</sup> Keating was compelled to call out troops and levied a militia to act with the regulars. The peaceful cultivators also joined with the dispossessed and disgruntled chuars. In June 1789, military forces were drawn out. The advent of the monsoon helped the authorities to maintain order for the time being. But in November 1789, the position of the Government became precarious. Rajnagar fell into the hands of the rebels. Bishnupur and Birbhum witnessed the complete suspension of the British rule. But at last from 1790, the Company's diplomacy proved successful. To save harvest the well-to-do cultivators stood against the rebels. The peasantry entered into sharp conflict with the insurgents whom they had welcomed a year ago. Bands of infuriated peasants fell upon the rebels and slew them mercilessly without giving them any rest.<sup>195</sup> The inhabitants heartily co-operated with the authorities in the restoration of peace and order in the country. According to Hunter's estimate the amount of property destroyed during the period of insurrection was worth £ 70,000 sterling.

In the middle of 1785, fresh disturbances occurred in Panchet and Pertabhum. On the representations of the Collec-

192. Hunter, Bengal mss. Records No. 1431. Vide Chaudhuri, *Ibid*, pp. 65-65.

193. Hunter, *Ibid*, No. 1371.

194. Hunter, mss. Records No. 1473. Vide, Chaudhuri, *Ibid*, pp. 65-66.

195. O'malley, L. S. S., *District Gazetteer of Bankura*, p. 31.

tor of Midnapore a guard was ordered to be stationed for the protection of the Zamindars and ryots of Pertabhum.<sup>196</sup> The Zamindar of Narajole was imprisoned and his property attached on account of unremitted balance. The lands of the Zamindar of Bahadurpur were also attached. The nankar lands of Rani Shiromoni were also attached till the balance of Rs. 1,195/- was adjusted. The Rani was very popular with the dispossessed rebels, paiks and exploited artisans of Anandapur factory. Therefore, this behaviour towards an aggrieved but helpless widow inflamed the public spirit.<sup>197</sup> Disturbances cropped up again in the Bogri pargana under Khosoul Patra and other paiks. And simultaneously vigorous measures were adopted to root out the causes of disturbances by violent means. The Collectors sent parwana to the Zamindars of Bhanjabhum and Bhanthabhum prohibiting them from affording protection or assistance to the rebellious paiks.<sup>198</sup>

In June, 1792, the Collector prohibited the sale of fire-arms or war-ammunitions to the paiks.<sup>199</sup> Capt. J. Ratteray, instead of relieving Collins, was forced to send an additional detachment to suppress the revolt in Balarampur.<sup>200</sup> The Company was bent on bringing down the prestige of Rani Shiromoni and the same fate of Rani Bhabani in Rajsahi had befallen on her. The Zamindari of the Rani was let out and brought under the Government management.<sup>201</sup> This inhuman behaviour towards the Rani constituted the major cause of the revolt of 1799. The Rani was allowed on her prayer only to have the nankar lands. News reached Midnapore from the Collector

196. Letters from S. Charles, W. Cowper, Thomas 'Graham to J. Peiarce, Calcutta, 25 August 1785.

197. Chakrabarti, Radharaman, Rani Shiromoni, Sharodia Basu-mati, 1365, pp. 49-68.

198. Com. of Rev. to the Collector, 12 February 1791.

199. J. Fombelle, Sub-Secretary to the Collector, 27 June 1792.

200. Capt. J. Ratteray to G. Dowdeswell, 3 Oct. 1793.

201. G. Dowdeswell, Acting Collector to the Board of Revenue, 29 January 1794.

of Ramgarh regarding the refractory conduct of the people of Tomar. Patkum, Panchet, Jhalda and Barabhum were again in turmoil and the disturbed conditions prevented the introduction of the Permanent Settlements in those areas till 1795. The most serious crisis developed in Bishnupur and Birbhum at the time.

The sporadic outbreaks which took place after 1781, were due considerably to some external factors. First, the Company's preoccupations in the Deccan wars with the Marathas and Mysore encouraged them to revolt. Second, the British policy of conciliation with the Bhonsle power encouraged the feudatory chiefs like Mayurbhanj to persevere in their contumacious disposition. Third, British policy of army recruitment, salt monopoly and the completion of the process of centralisation in the revenue affairs led to bidding and consequent sale of many Zamindaries that indirectly ruined the land-owning classes in the society. Fourth, the Company's financial stringency, heavy debt in wars led to pecuniary extortion. And lastly, the Nizamat authority of the Naib Nazim which was fast declining, the consequent lawlessness in the country-side and the failure of the Company's Government to assume full faujdary responsibility also led to complete breakdown of law and order in the agrarian areas.

### *Chapter III*

## **EARLY BRITISH RULE IN THE JUNGLE MAHALS AND MIDNAPORE SINCE 1785**

The years proceeding the Permanent Settlement were in many ways a period of transition which witnessed the consolidation of the British grip over the South Western Bengal. It was a period of hesitation and experimentation when the old order was fast changing under the impact of new conditions. Consequently, the Mughal revenue system and the nizamat frame work completely crumbled down.

This pre-Permanent Settlement phase was characterised by some distinct features. This period witnessed the gradual Europeanisation of administrative machinery and the enhancement of magisterial power of the district Collectors. Due to distrust of Indian Agencies the old governmental framework with Kanungos and some nizamat offices were abolished. With a view to economy and purifications, the Collectors were to have enhanced salary with increased responsibility. They were given once more the office of Judge of the Courts of Revenue. Simultaneously (27 June 1787) they were to administer criminal justice. By 1790 it was found that the Collectors had become the bottle-neck in the administrative machinery. Naturally a necessity was felt to exercise a control over their work. As a possible check to magisterial oppression, by Regulation II of 1793 the Board of Revenue and the Collectors were deprived of all judicial powers whereas the judges were appointed to sit in the District Diwani Adalats. They were also to preside over the Criminal Courts of Circuit. They were named Judge-Magistrates, appointed mostly from Ex-Collectors. In many cases clash of opinions arising out of difference of interests between the Collectors and Judges prevented concerted action to check lawless elements in the country-

side. But the increased magisterial power of Collectors did not at any rate ensure the continuity of peace in the countryside. The principle of "local police, local responsibility" was abandoned and the principle of making Zamindars responsible to keep law and order remained in the cold storage. Even the Zamindari chokies stationed in the river-banks were ordered to be abandoned. As no definite thanadari system was evolved from 1775 to '85 the rampant gang robbery could not be checked by sending army to the lawless areas. Even then, that the military detachments deputed to tranquilise the country did not refrain from committing excesses over the peaceful inhabitants of the soil, was illustrated in the contemporary records. The economic dislocation arising out of the unsettlement of land revenue system bred anarchy and discord. These facts point to a maxim that "economic distress and social evils are correlated." Half-hearted measures of Hastings to ensure order by maintaining some inadequate police-stations under thanadars proved ineffective. Since 1785, with the reorganisation of the police system thanadari framework came to be evolved in a distinct form. The Zamindars were ordered to disband their paik militia. They were urged to co-operate with the darogas. The psychological complex arising out of superior position of the thanadars who were coming from outside and being appointed by the Government made the Zamindars hostile towards them. Moreover, corruption in the system due to poor pay and other sources of illegal gratification which existed rendered the project ineffective. The maxim that "there cannot be robbery without receivers of robbed property" was true as gang robbery was linked up with higher class people like the money-lenders (mahajans) and zamindary amlas. The countryside criminal offences increased due to another factor also.

The pre-Permanent Settlement period witnessed the increasing recognition of the Zamindar's right over the soil but not over its fruits. Even so they were not, in fact, enjoying the position they had before the advent of the British rule in this

region. The land revenue was fixed for ever but avenues were closed for imposing extra imposts. Incidence of taxation naturally fell on some kinds of original producers. Moreover, the gradual urbanisation, loosening tie of the joint-family connections, drought, flood and other natural calamities, bargir invasions and gradual pauperisation of agricultural community prepared the ground for fertilisation of crime in villages.

Moreover, with rapid urbanisation of the social set up a new middle class was emerging. The vakils, the zamindary amlas, mahajans, originally thrown out of the agricultural sector but subsisting mainly on it, now forming a distinct class by themselves ushered in a new money-economy unnoticed before. They often gave incentive to gang robbery and were responsible for the spread of corruption.

With the land settlement experiments of Hastings crime and confusion reached their climax. After 1793 with the administrative consolidation gang robbery declined. Moreover, Cornwallis made a bid to wipe out corruption among the European officers. But corruption in the Indian official rank remained a constant headache to the early British rulers. It was felt by all concerned that the only solution to these problems rested on the final solution of the land settlement question.

### *Permanent Settlement*

With the arrival of Cornwallis in 1786 consolidation of the administrative grip over region was held to be a condition precedent to the permanent settlement of the soil. And here at last they found solution of three vexations problems so long debated upon : (1) whether the Zamindars were the hereditary proprietors or tax collectors of the soil ; (2) what would be the best mode of effective collection of taxes and (3) could the Government descend to the ryots ? The answer to these problems was that, the land revenue could only be effectively collected through the landlords. But the lands were settled



permanently to the Zamindars not because they were recognised as the hereditary proprietors of the soil. The British line of thinking was as ever, the maximisation of revenue and security of annual collection from the production sector as they could not directly establish contact with the original producers. Indirectly, however, the Company had to recognise the ownership of the Zamindars over the soil.

This project of Permanent Settlement of lands to the landed proprietors was no new experiment of Cornwallis. The question of Permanent Settlement has been discussed time and again. It will be interesting to record here the reaction of the British officials of this region on this point. The Council of Revenue at Patna recommended a settlement of the province on long or perpetual leases.<sup>1</sup> In answer to frequent and peremptory instructions to district officers to recover arrears that were irrecoverable the Collectors like Ed. Baber and Bently told the Board plainly that no satisfactory returns could be made until the faulty system was altered. When asked for suggestions Vansittart advocated for land settlement to the Zamindars for life.<sup>2</sup> Dacres indicted the five years farming system and was in favour of permanent settlement of revenue to the Zamindars.<sup>3</sup> In July 1775 Ducarel, the Collector of Purnea wanted a settlement either with inferior Talukdars or with the ryots themselves, if possible, upon a fixed and permanent rent.<sup>4</sup> Philip Francis always agreed that as the Government could not descend to the ryots, settlement should be made with the Zamindars.<sup>5</sup> Even Hastings and Barwell could not escape being influenced by these ideas.

1. Progs. of the Revenue Board, pp. 627-633, January 29, 1773 ; R.B.P. pp. 636-38, 29 January, 1773.

2. Progs. of G.G. in C., pp. 271-73, January 27, 1775.

3. Ibid, 10 February, 1775, Progs. of the G.G. in C., 7 April, 1775.

4. Ibid, 18 July, 1775.

5. Idem, 18 November, 1777. Also Francis, *Original Minutes of the G.G. in C .....Revenues of Bengal, 1782* ; Ramsbotham, *P.I.H R.C.*, Vol. VII, 1925.

To the Company's authorities the main point for decision was not to determine who was the rightful owner of the soil but to discuss how effectively and on what sure basis the land-revenue could be collected as it was found inexpedient to establish direct contact with the ryots.<sup>6</sup> Cornwallis was inclined to settle the land permanently with the most industrious class of people and not with the existing Zamindars. Secondly, he felt the need of regulations to ensure security of the ryots and the dependent Talukdars.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, early in 1793 the Permanent Settlement of revenue was promulgated. It had three-fold impacts on the agricultural economy of Midnapore and the adjacent salt and forest tracts and all this impacts ultimately led to the fast pauperisation of the original producers.

The settlement was as usual marked by overassessment.<sup>8</sup> The zamindar was not entitled to any remission on the plea of loss by any natural calamity. In case of default in payment, his land would be sold in liquidation of the balance.<sup>9</sup> He could not even impose any extra imposts on the ryots as abwabs or mathot,<sup>10</sup> which seem to point to the fact that the ryots were not left severely alone in the British system. This period witnessed an increased oppression of the zamindary amlas over the ryots under which the zamindary paternalism was thrown into the background. Recorded instances show that the turbulent paik sardars and tahasildars in the habit of misappropriation of public revenue were sometimes discharged from their offices. They wreaked vengeance over the poor inhabitants of the soil by creating terror in the countryside.

The appearance of patni system was another unforeseen result of the Permanent Settlement. The patnidars could raise

6. Colebrooke, H. T., *Remarks on the Present State of Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 44.

7. Governor-General's Minute, September 18, 1789.

8. Progs. of the Board of Revenue, Vol. 42. Quoted by Sinha, N. K., *Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1962, p. 153.

9. Fifth Report etc., Vol. I, p. 33.

10. Bengal Regulations 1795-1805, Reg. VIII, LV.

rents, resume unauthorised rent-free lands, distrain and attach lands for balances. Sometimes they were themselves really lease-holders. They could also alienate their right wholly or partly to the durpatnidars. The creation of a long chain of intermediaries might have ensured a collection of maximum rent but its pressure was felt heavy over the ryots. Rack-renting thus became a feature of this land system. Socially speaking these intermediaries began to live among the cultivators and in order to justify their new role they adjusted themselves to the "easy-going, indolent and not altogether self-satisfied life which prevailed in zamindari society".<sup>11</sup> Cornwallis had a pious wish that the zamindars would grant pattas to the ryots<sup>12</sup> and in July 1792, the Board also enquired into the progress of grant of pattas.<sup>13</sup> But there is no record to show that the jungle zamindars granted pattas to their ryots. This may be due possibly to aversion to written law <sup>14</sup> Thus the patta regulation, in fact, became a dead letter. The increasing pressure of population, the withering away of domestic industries and of all tillage rights whether of property or of occupancy ultimately led to the inevitable consequence i.e., pauperisation of the original producers and from this there was no way out.

But the condition of the agricultural community which was gradually deteriorating may be analysed from four stand-points: (1) relative role of produce and money-rent in the mode of payment of the ryots, (2) the system of usurious advance paving the way for the decline of independent peasantry, (3) decline in the status of independent peasantry and (4) the consequent growth of a section of richer and privi-

11. Sinha, Narendra Krishna, *Op.cit.*, II, pp. 176-179.

12. G.G.'s minute, 3 February 1790.

13. Progs. of Board of Revenue, 23 July, 1792.

14. The zamindar disliked it because it would prevent the levy of unauthorised cesses in future. The ryot disliked a written lease as it might open doors for new imposition of cesses.

leged peasantry.<sup>15</sup> In the salt and forest tracts in the pre-Permanent Settlement period which reached relatively a lower level of technique in agricultural productions than the rest of the province the produce rent played a major part in enabling the ryots to pay their dues to the proprietor of the soil. But the introduction of a money economy with its batta problems and the gradual withering away of landlords' authority to share the full fruits of the soil, made money-rent play increasingly a vital role. By the Permanent Settlement the revenue was fixed for ever, which likewise led to a fixation of the money-rent of the ryots. But in most cases different kinds of produce-rent though in diminishing form remained and the ryots had no way to keep secret some of his means of production as a necessary device to counteract the indefinite demands of the collectors.

Though this relative role of produce and money rent was one of the causes of the decline of independent peasantry, it was not evidently the sole cause. The factors like gradual rise in prices of daily necessities of life such as salt, greater quantity of currency in circulation and relatively little scope of marketability of ryot's produce also indirectly played a considerable part in this tragic drama.

In the decline of independent peasantry the role of usurious advance to have the anticipated produce of land was an important point of study. Lack of saving capacity, fast rate of subdivision and fragmentation of land, rapid decline in home industries, greater dependence on cultivation in absence of alternative means of production, made the system of advance indispensable for the cultivators. The recorded instances show that this system of advance payment became an essential feature of the land revenue. Even the zamindars could not but procure advance from the Government for the repair of embankments.<sup>16</sup> The revenue records are full of illustrations

15. Chaudhury, Benoy, *Bengal : Past and Present*, Jubilee Number.

16. F. N. Thackeray's letter to Cowper, President of the Board of Revenue, April 30, 1793.

as to how this system of advance tended to take the form of usury and made it impossible for the ryots to get out of the clutches of the money-lenders with the result that the independent peasant community gradually degraded into a class of dependent peasantry.<sup>17</sup> The system of cultivation for half-share of the produce was in most cases the disastrous result of this usurious advance.

This decline in the economic position of the producers is to be noticed in three types of agricultural community : (a) Peasantry with land but no stock ; (b) Peasants with stock but no land ; (c) different classes of landless labour including day and seasonal wage-earners.<sup>18</sup> In the Jungle Mahals ghatwali and other non-revenue paying tenures and uncultivable waste lands built up a section of peasantry who had land but were dependent for production on a class of wage-earners with stock. The resumption of non-revenue paying lands suddenly threw this section of producers out of this decadent economy and denied them even any alternative employment opportunity in the countryside as the work of police establishments were taken over by the Company's government which were henceforth to be run mostly by people coming from outside the locality. Thus the Permanent Settlement with its rigidity of regulations threw them out of the existing machinery and made them dependent on a section of richer peasantry with stock. Simultaneously this decline was visible in cases of landless peasantry cultivating land with stock of owners of the soil for half-share of the produce. In fact, the lot of peasants with stock but without land was better than the former class. Moreover, in an "environment in motion" it was not difficult for a ryot to reclaim wastes or swampy pastures under a moderate jamma or resume non-revenue paying plots of lands. But the ruthless enforcement of distraint regulations and sometimes forced sale of peasant properties both moveables and immovables at

17. Board of Revenue, Vol. 5, 11 December, 1786, p. 225.

18. Choudhury, Benoy, Bengal : Past and Present, Jubilee Number.

a nominal price created havoc in their life. The prevalence of gang-robbery and unforeseen disaster in the economic condition of the proprietors prompted them to deprive this class of peasants of their stock. The cattle and seeds of this peasantry, as illustrated in the revenue records, were naturally the first victims of depredations of the zamindars and discharged sardars of the mahals. The worsening condition of these two classes of peasantry ultimately affected the destitute peasantry. As a consequence of usurious advance, in some cases compulsion exercised upon this class of ryots reduced them almost to servitude without any independence of their own to change masters. They could save their life only by fleeing to the neighbouring Maratha territories. This process of large-scale transplantation of population and mainly the immigration to the neighbouring Maratha territories were visible more clearly in the case of Adjoora molungis or wage-earner manufacturers of salt without land in the salt tracts.

And lastly, the decline of independent peasantry was the inevitable consequence of the growth of a richer section of cultivators with stock and land sometimes with an alternative means of production. The traders, manufacturers of home-made industries besides land had other means of subsistence and their better position compelled a class of wage-earner class to be dependent on them for bread. The high caste populace, traditional armed retainers of the zamindars who had become, under the new system, revenue tahasildars or surbarakars of the Company, enjoyed a privileged position in the socio-economic structure and they constituted a cementing force of the early British rule in the Nimki and Jungle Mahals. And they formed the genesis of the middle class of the later period.

### *The Chuar Rebellion of 1799*

Therefore the post-Permanent Settlement period witnessed a fast decline not only in the status of the propertied class but

of the original producers as well. This was the background against which the Chuar Rebellion of 1799 may be studied in an objective way.<sup>19</sup> The Chuar Rebellion was partly a protest against the stringent sale laws by which defaulter zamindars were wiped out and new middle class peoples got entry into the soil. Extensive fraud was practised to avoid the properties being sold out and the Company's government on their part endeavoured to detect them by adopting punitive measures.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the policy of the government to secure non-revenue paying paikan lands spelt economic ruin of the zamindars and also of their armed retainers. By the rules of 1793, the Collectors were required to proceed by suit in court as plaintiffs, against any person supposed to hold rent-free land without a valid tenure. Thus the introduction of two principles : (1) that the zamindari tenures are liable to sale for arrears of jamma and (2) resumption of non-revenue paying lands which touched the position of the general agricultural community were the main sources of social discontents of the period.<sup>21</sup> This was, of course, early detected by the government, with the result that in 1800 the landholders of the Jungle Mahals were vested with a joint charge of the police of their respective estates in concert with the darogahs appointed under Regulation XXII of 1793. They were required to be on guard against the chuars in consideration of which their resumed paikan lands were restored.<sup>22</sup>

Arising out of the stringent application of sale laws and resumption of paikan lands (besides other causes) the rapid pauperisation of the chuar ryots and the consequent unsettle-

19. The Collector of Midnapur to the Board of Revenue, 29 May, 1799.

20. Letters Issued to the Board of Revenue from the Collector, 2 & 3 January, 1800.

21. Bengal : Past and Present, 1831-32, Vol. XI, 735, III, Appendix No 74, p. 131. Quoted by Chaudhuri, S. B., *Civil Disturbances etc.*, p. 19.

22. Price, Notes etc., p. 69.

ment in the social relationships were other factors contributing to the Chuar Rebellion of 1799. The depression which was created under this system was both financial and psychological. The depression was psychological because the steep fall in their status in the countryside joined hands with the disbandment of paik militia who fought and won for the East India Company in many a field of battle in different parts of India.<sup>23</sup> This community of traditional armed retainers found themselves overnight degraded to the position of the wage-earners as well as the day and seasonal labourer having no stock or lands of their own. The depression was financial because they became increasingly dependent on a section of richer peasantry who had stock and under the new system had also become the owners of land, sometimes with alternative occupation. The judicial records of the period were full of informations regarding oppression of the thanadars over this class of people.<sup>24</sup>

The Chuar Rebellion of 1799 like the paik disturbances of the previous generations took place under the leadership of the naik or paik community who were traditionally a military caste and were for generations, able leaders. The new regulations marked a precipitous fall in their status as they were deprived of both police duties and paikan lands. They were supported by the peasants who had so long tilled lands for the paiks without rent but now they were subjected to the new system of taxation. The general population of the countryside also had to lend their support for the enhancement of rent which they were not formerly required to pay to the naiks. By the Regulation XXIII of 1793 they were also taxed for the expense of the police establishments. This Regulation was, however, rescinded by the rules in Regulation VI of 1797 and Stamp duties were introduced to defray the expense of the

23. Imhoff, the Collector of Midnapur to the Board of Rev., 25 May 1799.

24. Progs. of G.G. in C., 23 August 1793. J. Fendall, Magistrate to G.G. in C., 15 Aug. 1793.



police. Curiously enough in some of the revenue records preserved in the Midnapore Collectorate one can scent a nefarious plan of the Company to introduce opium in the country.<sup>25</sup> A glimpse into the paik and chuar disturbances may be had in the torn and worm-eaten volumes of correspondence from Midnapur and preserved in the Record Room of the Collectorate.

Avoiding details of recurrences of the acts of violence as narrated by J. C. Price attempts may be made to sketch the general picture of the rebellion. In the previous chapter it has been observed that in the early 90's of the 18th century social discontents found expression in Bogri and Karnagarh. But since 1794 revolts took a serious turn. Major Crawford was responsible for restoring order in Jhalda and Patkum areas. In 1792, Patkum area was wantonly devastated by the chuar-paiks and the annual revenue due from the zamindar of Patkum was suspended. But late in 1794 Jhalda and adjoining estates of Tomar in Ramgarh once again flared up into rebellion. In fact, disturbances spread like a wild-fire to the adjoining areas of Panchet, Jhalda and Barabhum so rapidly that the Permanent Settlement of the area was not completed till 1795. Meanwhile the Panchet zamindar was shown as fallen into arrears of revenue. In 1795 his estate was put up to sale and was purchased by one Nilambar Mitra. The zamindar complained about the illegality of the sale as it was done in collusion between his diwan and the Collectorate staff. His prayer was turned down but the zamindar succeeded in refusing the auction-purchaser any footing in the estate with the support of his loyal tenants. By 1798 the whole area covering Manbhum and Barabhum was practically in a state of insurrection.

The leadership of the disturbances in the Barabhum area

25. Extract of a letter from the Board of Trade, September 25, 1806 ; Extract from the Progs. of the Hon'ble G.G. in C. in the Public Dept., 9 October 1806.

was taken over by a powerful sardar, Lal Singh of Satarakhani. The neighbouring zamindars of Panchet, Patkum and Barabhum dreaded him and granted him taluk for maintenance of order in the locality. When he forcibly annexed some territories of Jagannath Dhal the latter inflicted a crushing defeat on him. After the death of Raghunath Narayan of Barabhum with whom the Permanent Settlement had been concluded early in 1798 a dispute of succession arose between the two minor sons. The eldest son succeeded in gaining Lal Singh over to his interest but later on retired to Midnapore to live a peaceful life. Naturally taking advantage of the weakness of the youngest son Lal Singh, Kishan Pator and other Sardars committed hostilities over the newly possessed tenants and over government tahashildars who had recently taken over charge of revenue collection of the area in the very presence of helpless thanadars and small bands of detachments sent from Midnapore to quell the disturbances.

The social unrest also flared up in the Roypur Bogri area. Durjan Singh, the proprietor of Roypur pargana was dispossessed by the operation of sale laws and his taluks were sold on to an adventurer. In May 1798, his followers, a body of 1500 chuars all of whom were dispossessed from the resumed Paikan lands, made their appearance at Raipur in the southwestern Bankura district and set fire to the bazar and cutchari and raided the countryside. Durjan Singh at last effectively prevented the auction-purchaser from getting possession of the estate. He was, of course, arrested and brought to Midnapur for trial. But as no body dared to give evidence against him he had to be released. His release excited the rebels to commit depredations on a wider scale. This compelled the Company's government to cancel the sale of Panchet and to restore the estate to the zamindar. Being free, Durjan Singh also in conjunction with other rebel sardars plunged with all his might into the Midnapur disturbances of 1799.<sup>26</sup>

26. G.G. in C. Progs., 22 February 1799, to W. Cowper, President etc.

But the chuar rising took a serious turn in and around Midnapur. In the vicinity of Midnapur in three places the paiks assembled with full strength i.e., Bahadurpur (about 10 miles to the west of Midnapur), Salbani (with a railway station in the Bankura line) and Karnagarh (about 5 miles north-east of Midnapur). Karnagarh was the residence of Rani Shiro-moni whose zamindari had been brought under khas management, paikan lands resumed and paik militia disbanded. Official correspondence of the earlier years frequently referred to the social unrest within this area in which were situated the salt golah of Anandapur and the Company's factory for producing cotton and silk textiles. Naturally this area was more economically advanced than the rest of the Jungle Mahals before the 90's of the century. But the economic dislocation as an aftermath of the Permanent Settlement reduced the independent peasantry almost to servitude. Moreover in 1788, the ryots suffered from the enhanced prices of salt<sup>27</sup> and in 1791, complaints were filed against the heavy exactions made by Raja Sundarnarayan of Kasijura.<sup>28</sup> There were also frequent raids of the Maratha bargirs from Patashpur, Kamardachour and Bhograi.<sup>29</sup> The socio-economic discontents reached its climax with the resumption of paikan lands of Rani Shiro-moni. Letters of Collector of Midnapur show that the Rani's rent-free lands were held in attachment in 1791 till the balance was adjusted.<sup>30</sup> This punitive measure suddenly threw the disbanded paiks out of the economic machinery and the destitute chuar sardars kindled the flame of rebellion. The

27. Hunter, Beng. M.SS. Rec. 1374. Quoted by Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances etc.*, pp. 67-72.

28. Hunter, *Op.cit.*, No. 1933. Vide S. B. Chaudhuri, *Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

29. Letter to the G.G. in C. enclosing report of collector of Midnapur of acts of violence committed by the Marathas on the ryots of pargana Dantun. Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, *Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

30. Hunter, *Op.cit.*, No. 1934, 1935.

correspondence of the Midnapore Collector in the period ranging from early 1799 to early 1800 contain alarming reports of the widespread disturbances that had broken out.<sup>31</sup>

The local officials of the Company's government, on the other hand, showed utter incapacity and helplessness in suppressing the violence and adopted half-hearted measures. Early in 1798 troops were sent to restore order in Balarampur, Fullampur, Anandapur and Buddercolly.<sup>32</sup> At Narajole a detachment was also sent.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile Durjan Singh with about 500 followers surrounded the thana of Gunada and a skirmish took place till day-break.<sup>34</sup> The purchaser of the Raipur pargana could neither collect revenue nor supply provisions for the Company's detachment. Capt. Henry was sent to quell the disturbances created by Durjan Singh. But the subedar could not help the auction-purchaser and the lands remained uncultivated. The naik Kanu Bakshi fled to Balarampur for fear of his life and as the revenue could not be collected the pargana Raipur again came to sale. Subsequently, the Collector suspended the sale and waited for the order of the Board of Revenue before taking final decision. Some sepoy sent to fight out the chuars began to commit depredations over the ryots of Lalgarrh.

In July 1798, about 400 paiks under Govardhan Dikpati, a bagdi leader of pargana Bogri appeared in Chandrakona and took possession of the place. Revenue collection by the government tahasildars was thoroughly suspended. There were also troubles in the pargana of Kasijura and reports of frequent skirmish with the sepoy in Basudevpur of pargana

31. Vide : Letters Issued Midnapore Collectorate Correspondence bundle.

32. Letters from Lt. Gregory, C. in C., Midnapore, 26 February 1798.

33. Lt. Gregory to Imhoff, 28 February 1798.

34. Imhoff, Collector of Midnapore to G. Dowdeswell, Secretary to the Government in the judicial dept., Midnapur, 15 May 1798.

Tamlook reached Midnapur. The detachment sent to Roypur area under a European Officer was recalled because the zamindars of the disturbed areas would supply neither provisions nor informations.<sup>35</sup>

In 1799 troubles in the Jungle Mahals alarmed the authorities at Calcutta who were determined to take necessary steps to quell disturbances. The Vice-President in Council threw the entire responsibility of the resumption of the paikan jaghirs on the Board of Revenue and called it to account for not "having kept it sufficiently informed of the adoption of measures which had unfortunately resulted in so much mischief".<sup>36</sup> On March 29, 1799 the Vice-President in Council asked the Collector to restore the paikan lands to their respective owners but later on the order was issued to him to postpone his action till disturbances were pacified. Thus while the Vice-President in Council, the Board of Revenue, the Collector and the Judge-Magistrate of Midnapur were corresponding with one another on the measures to be taken to subdue the disturbances the paiks were gradually gaining in more strength. The zamindars refused to co-operate with the government amins to settle land disputes.<sup>37</sup> Within a short time the chuars became so menacing at Midnapur that the authorities took alarmed and asked for military help.<sup>38</sup> Krishna Bhanja, the ijaradar of tuppa Bahadurpur (6 miles west of Midnapur) was murdered by the rebels and as such revenue could not be collected. Salboni, where the tahashildars of hudda Ghoshpur and of the lately resumed paikan lands had their offices, was plundered and

35. Gregory, Judge-Magistrate of Midnapur to Imhoff, the Collector, Midnapur, 25 August 1798.

36. Letter to the Board of Revenue and the Judge-Magistrate, Midnapur, 20 March 1799.

37. Progs. G.G. in C., 8 March 1799, misc. No. 6 enclosed in Rev. Boards letter of 19 Feb. to W. Cowper, President etc. of the Board of Rev. From J. Imhoff, Mid. Dist., 14 Feb. 1799.

38. Progs. G.G. in C., 8 March 1799 to W. Cowper etc. from J. Imhoff, Collector, Mid., 23 Feb. 1799.

its surbarakar Bhaktaram was murdered.<sup>39</sup> The ryots fled to Anandapur thana for protection and from there took shelter in Midnapur. An Amin Ram Chakravorty deputed to make a jamabandi of Salboni and adjoining villages surrounded by the rebels. He saved his life by a chance escape. Govardhan Dikpati was assisted by Kanak Singh, the purchaser of pargana Bogri. In Bogri the chuar menace could not be suppressed. So it was decided not to collect arrears of revenue unless the revolt was completely crushed.<sup>40</sup> The nizamat sepoy were cut to pieces and no assistance could be given to protect the mercantile establishments of the Company at Anandapur. These paiks who were supported by the naib of Jhargram, threatened to burn Midnapur.<sup>41</sup> The Magistrate asked the Board in February, 1789 for sending adequate police force, because the daroga and police force at Satpati which is about 6 coss west of Midnapur had to retreat.<sup>42</sup> Rani Shiromoni was at last held responsible for creating disturbances in league with Chunilal Khan of Narajole.<sup>43</sup> A military detachment took possession of Karnagarh and Narajole and put the Rani under arrest and kept her confined in Abasgarh (2 miles north-west of Midnapur). The nizamat Adalat was directed to proceed without delay according to the Regulations. Meanwhile the zamindary of Barabhum was overrun by the paiks and the government tahashildars could not even collect a rupee from the ryots.<sup>44</sup> The daroga and the sebandi sepoy

39. G.G. in C. Progs., 22 Feb. 1799 to W. Cowper etc. by J. Imhoff, Zillah Midnapur, 5 February 1799.

40. Progs. G.G. in C. Resolution, 29 March 1799, para 5.

41. Letter from the Judge-Magistrate to Col. Dunn, Commanding at Midnapur, 19 March 1799.

42. G.G. in C., 15 Feb. 1799, No. 25, enclosed in Sect. Rev. Boards letter on 15 Feb. 1799.

43. Progs. G.G. in C., 15 Feb. 1799, No. 25 enclosed in Rev. Boards letter of 15 Feb. 1799.

44. Progs. of G.G. in C., 12 April 1799 to W. Cowper, President etc. From J. Imhoff, Midnapur, 21 March, 1799.

were helplessly stationed at Bahadurpur thana. The tahasildar of Balarampur thana was in danger of life, as communication was cut off and there was large-scale transplantation of peaceful ryots.<sup>45</sup> The disturbances in the Bhanjabhum pargana were so intense that R. Gregory the Judge-Magistrate, advised the itinerant justices to stop coming to Midnapur.<sup>46</sup>

But the concerted action which should have been taken by the Company's local officials was prevented. The differences of opinion developed as usual between the Collector. Imhoff and R. Gregory, the Judge-Magistrate of Midnapur who was accused by the former of not taking strong measures against the rebels. Gregory was directed to proceed to Calcutta by the Vice-President "to explain in person matters connected with the insurrection". Imhoff became the Judge-Magistrate and Ernst was appointed the Collector of Midnapur.<sup>47</sup> The Darogas of Roypur, Silda, Satpati and Manbhum were dismissed as they appeared to have left their stations. A strong reinforcement was despatched to Midnapur to disperse the rebels. The Collector and the Magistrate jointly suggested that the zamindars of the Jungle Mahals should be entrusted with police duties and paikan lands restored to the possessors. In spite of these active measures throughout the year 1799 the paik insurrection continued unabated.

The Rani of Karnagarh, Chunilal Khan and Narnarain Bakshi were remanded to Midnapur by the nizamat Adalat and they arrived at Bangaraj village, only at half a coss distance from Anandapur. The rebels gathered momentum and attacked Roopcharan, the government tahasildar who escaped to Midnapur. The rebel sardars Lal Singh, Durjan Singh and Mohan

45. Progs. G.G. in C., 12 April 1799. Letter from J. Imhoff, 30 March 1799.

46. Letter from the Magistrate, 19 March 1799, Midnapur Collectrate Bundle.

47. Letter dated 29 April 1799, to Imhoff, Mid. Collect. Bundle.

Singh began joint operations against the government.<sup>48</sup> In Manbhum also the disturbances were increasing daily and the military protection was necessary. The parganas Amiyanagar and Suphur fell completely into the possession of the paiks.

The ravages became even more serious in 1800. On February 16, 1800, Ernst wrote to Cowper, President of the Board of Revenue, that the "chuars raided the zamindari of one Kishan Churn Chatterji and plundered the maujas of Ceamorry, Inaitpore, Ghosepore, Rugaenautpore and Aedipore. Madhab Singh, the brother of the Raja of Barabhum, at the head of his chuar followers became so formidable that Wellesley's government had to adopt adequate measures for his apprehension. Other leaders of the time were Raja Mohan Singh, zamindar of Juriah and Lachman Singh who hurled defiance from his mountain stronghold of Dulma".<sup>49</sup>

But it may be said that since 1800 the strength of the paiks was considerably crushed and remissions in revenues were granted. The problem so long unsolved was finally decided as the government recognised the rights of the proprietors over the soil and the government was not to descend to the ryots by establishing direct contact with them by eliminating this intermediary class. Thus the 'injudicious system' of the management of the paikan lands was postponed. The zamindars of the Jungle Mahals were armed with powers to maintain peace in their locality and the stringent sale laws were not enforced arbitrarily for the time being. Henry Strachey who had taken charge of the district, adopted a conciliatory policy towards the zamindars. Blunt, the Magistrate of Bankura suggested the annexation of the jungle estate of Raipur to the district of 'Bancoorah' as a measure of security against

48. Letters to and from the Collector, 4, 9, 18 October 1799, Mid. Collectorate.

49. N. L. Chatterjee in 'Bengal Past and Present', LXXIII (S.N. 137), pp. 73ff., Jungle Mahals under Lord Wellesley; Also quoted by Dr. S. B. Choudhuri, *Civil Disturbances in India etc.*, pp. 70-71.



periodical inroads and even proposed that the zamindar of Burdwan might be induced to relinquish his rights of the lands in the Senapati mahal to remove the difficulty of collecting revenues from these festering tenants.<sup>50</sup> Dowdeswell, Secretary to the government in the judicial department also emphatically expressed his idea that "the sources of disturbances can only be removed by some relaxation on the part of the present zamindar and his dependent talukdar in their 'injudicious exactions' from a daring tenantry inured to the use of arms, possessing lands which they were accustomed to consider from time immemorial as their 'hereditary right', the dispossession from which will be productive of serious ill consequences to the peace of the pargana".<sup>51</sup> A general amnesty for all political offenders were declared but some of the paiks were hanged publicly to keep the people in terror of the power of the government. Rani Shiromoni was spared and the Collector of Midnapur was directed to invest her with the management of her estate but she was heavily assessed. Chunilal was released but Narnarain was imprisoned.

Even then, the chuars were not completely subdued. In 1806 the chuars again relapsed into adopting violent methods.<sup>52</sup> A letter from Blunt, the Magistrate of Bankura, to George Dowdeswell, dated 22 December 1809, refers to a body of 500 chuars who were assembled in the jungle estate of Raipur for committing depredations. At last a regulation (Regulation XVIII of 1805) was passed in 1805 by which the tracts, called the Jungle Mahals, situated in the zilas of Birbhum, Burdwan and Midnapur, being detached from the jurisdiction of the

50. Report of the Regional Records Survey Committee for West Bengal (1949-50), *Op.cit.*, pp. 34-36.

51. Report of the Reg. Surv. Com. (1949-50), p. 36. In a letter to Dowdeswell, 9 March, 1808. Blunt analysed the causes of troubles in the jungle estates.

52. W. W. Hunter, M.S. Records, Nos. 13228, 13337. Quoted by S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances etc.*, p. 72.

Magistrates of those zilas, were placed under the jurisdiction of an officer called the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahals. The district thus formed was composed of 23 parganas and mahals, of which seven were transferred from Midnapur, viz., Chhatna, Barabhum, Manbhum, Suphur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal and Bhalaidiha. After the Bhumij Rebellion of 1832, a change of administration was decided upon, and by Regulation XIII of 1833 the district of the Jungle Mahals was abolished, the greater part of it being formed into the district of Manbhum.

## *Chapter IV*

### **ANGLO-MAYURBHANJ RELATIONS ( 1760-1804 )**

Mayurbhanj with an area of 4,243 square miles was situated on the western side of Midnapore District. It has been ruled by princes of the Bhanja dynasty the origin of which may be traced back to a remote past on the basis of copper plate grants and other archaeological data. Situated on the frontiers of Orissa and Bengal this state in the ancient times had successfully resisted the pretensions of the neighbouring rulers. For the history of Mayurbhanj of the Muslim period the sources of information were very scanty. The relationship of the Mayurbhanj Rajas with the Nawabs of Bengal is known from some contemporary Muslim accounts of the first half of the 18th Century. This account refers to the time preceding the invasion of the Maratha bargirs in Bengal. After 1760 adequate source materials are available to construct a history of the Mayurbhanj rulers and that of their relation with the Company's Government.

In the period between 1760 to 1804 three distinct phases of relationship of the Mayurbhanj rulers with the Company's Government may be formed. In the first phase which terminated in 1780 the Mayurbhanj Raja followed the policy of tacit acceptance of the British Suzerainty and agreed to pay the exorbitant demands for revenue. This was only because the ruler was anxious to maintain territorial integrity of his kingdom from the aggression of the Bhonsle power ruling over Orissa. The second phase which continued up to the death of the Raja Damodar Bhanja in 1796, was a period of protest against the British revenue settlement. In this stage the decline of the power of the Bhonsle encouraged him to revolt against the Company's Government. The third phase was the period of pacification when the Company's Government adopted a

conciliatory policy towards the widow, Rani Sumitra after the demise of the Raja. This period was also characterised by the domestic quarrel between the reigning queen and the would-be monarch, the adopted son of Sumitra, the Tikayet or Tribikram Bhanja. The British rulers on the eve of their war against the Marathas in the early 19th century endeavoured to reconcile both the parties in vain with the result that the Tikayet had to give way. In 1803 Mayurbhanj was also included within Orissa when that province was annexed to the British dominions. A struggle then ensued for the maintenance of the integrity of Mayurbhanj within the limits of British rule.

The Company's Government had always considered this state not as an independent principality but as a revenue-paying zamindary dependent either upon the Nawab of Bengal or upon the faujdar of Cuttack. But, in fact, the Mayurbhanj Raja was not a Zamindar in the sense in which the jungle Zamindars were considered.

### *Political Background*

Throughout the Mughal period the term zamindary was used in the Jungle and Nimki Mahals in two different senses. One type of zamindars yielded 'peshkash' to the ruler of the Suba. The other type was the ordinary revenue-paying zamindars the revenue being fixed by the ruling power. The proprietors of these tracts were regarded more as farmers or collectors of revenue than as owners of estates. This difference raises the question, whether the zamindar was the owner of the soil who could appropriate different types of yields of the soil for himself without paying tax as a token of his submission to the ruler of the Suba.<sup>1</sup> The Company's Government argued, following the line of Murshid Quli I and Mir Qasim, that the

1. Boughton Rous, *Dissertation Concerning the Landed Properties of Bengal*, London, M. Dec. XCI; pp. 28-30.

zamindars were merely tax-collectors on behalf of the Government, and were, therefore, subjected to assessments by the Company's Government. The jungle Zamindars and specially the rulers of Mayurbhanj refused to accept this proposition. Even Murshid Quli and Mir Qasim had to recognise the special status of these 'wardens of the marchlands' over their estates.

The Mayurbhanj rulers had always claimed the privilege of immunity from either paying peshkash or a fixed revenue to the Nawab's exchequer. In fact, they never paid revenue unless forced by invading armies. This attitude of evading demands of the Company was also evident from the British records after the 70's of the 18th century. This special status which the Mayurbhanj rulers including the other jungle Zamindars enjoyed seems to have originated from two general causes. First, on account of its geographical position the rulers of Mayurbhanj from the earliest period had enjoyed that privilege from the Orissan Hindu kings. This privileged position was generally recognised by the Muslim rulers. Second, the decline of the Mughal empire also enabled the Mayurbhanj rulers to extend their immunities.

The decline was more clearly defined towards the second half of the 18th century when the hold of the rulers of Bengal was growing weak over Mayurbhanj. After the battle of Gheria, Alivardi Khan seized the throne of Bengal slaying Sarfaraz, the son of Shujauddin. Murshid Quli II, the deputy Governor of Orissa revolted against Alivardi Khan in collusion with Mirza Baqr, his son-in-law, and the rulers of Mayurbhanj. Alivardi Khan invaded Orissa early in 1741. According to Ghulam Husain, the author of *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, "he defeated the garrison of chuars and khandaits of the ruler of Mayurbhanj, Raja Chakradhar Bhanja at Rajghat on the banks of the river 'Subanrika'."<sup>2</sup> This proved to be a decisive move against Murshid Quli II who fled to the Deccan. Alivardi returned to

2. Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Tr. by Maulavi Abd-us-Salam, Calcutta, 1904, p. 327.

Murshidabad very soon but the rebels renewed their strength. Mirza Baqr returned from the Deccan and received reinforcements from the defeated Mayurbhanj Raja. The revolt was ultimately crushed early in 1742. Alivardi this time was determined to demolish the stronghold of the rebels in Mayurbhanj. According to the author of *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, "Jagat Isar, the Raja of Mayurbhanj who had taken sides with Mirza Baqr and had not submitted to the authority of Mahabat Jang" fled away to the mountains.<sup>3</sup> But on receiving news of the approach of the Marathas Alivardi withdrew towards Bengal.<sup>4</sup> It was stated in *Sier-ul-Mutakherin* that the Mayurbhanj Raja was murdered in the presence of Alivardi Khan when the former paid him a visit. Then the country was laid waste.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Ibid*, pp. 327, 337.

4. *Riyaz*, pp. 327-338.

5. *Sier-ul-Mutakherin*, Ghulan Husain, *A View of Modern Times*, Vol. 2, repinted by K. Cambray & Co., Calcutta, 1926, p. 507 ; *Riyaz*, p. 337.

From these statements a very interesting controversy emerges. In his account of the battle of Rajghat, the author of the *Riyaz* calls the Zamindar of Mayurbhanj Raja Jagardhar Bhanja and in other place, he calls him Jagat Isar. On the other hand, from the sanads and land grants it is evident that the name of the reigning Raja of Mayurbhanj at that time was Raghunath Bhanja (A.D. 1728-1751) (*Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanj*, P. Acharya, I, H.R.C.P., Vol. XVIII, 1942). According to N. N. Basu (*Arch. Surv. of Mayurbhanj*, p. 18) these two names indicate two personalities and after the assassination of Chakradhar Bhanja Mayurbhanj was greatly troubled by the ravages of the Muhammedan army. R. D. Bannerji (*History of Orissa*, II, p. 78, F.N. 4) holds that Jagardhar and Jagadisvara may be the same as Chakradhar Bhanja who was the successor of Raghunath Bhanja and the predecessor of Damodar Bhanja. Dr. K. K. Datta (*Alivardi Khan and His Times*, p. 44) had also adopted the rendering of Jagadisvara Bhanja quoting authority of *Riyaz* and Yusuf. Mulavi Abdus Salam has suggested that Jagardhara would be Chakradhara. In *Vansanucharita* it is recorded that Maharaja Raghunath Bhanja Deva succeeded his father while he was a baby of 6 months old. He died in 1749 at the age of 23. As he was a minor almost throughout his short career,

From these two conflicting accounts it seems that during the minority of Raghunath Bhanja, the ruler of Mayurbhanj, his uncle Chakradhar Bhanja and grand-uncle Jagatesvara Bhanja conducted the administration of the state on behalf of the minor. Alivardi had to face their resistance.

The retreat of Alivardi finally in 1742 from Mayurbhanj was followed by a fierce struggle between the Muslims and the Marathas over the forest tracts till Alivardi agreed to assign surplus revenues of Orissa to Raghuji I in the middle of 1751.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile Raghunath Bhanja died and his uncle Maharaja Chakradhar Bhanja ascended the throne. From the accounts of T. Motte who was sent to Shambalpur by Clive in 1776, it is known that before Damodar Bhanja's accession the parganas belonging to the Mayurbhanj estate on the eastern side of Motte's route were seized by the Marathas.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Period of Alliance and surrender with the Company*

Under these circumstances Damodar Bhanja who ascended the throne in 1761, hastened to come to terms with the Company's Government with a view to maintaining the integrity of his kingdom. Moreover, in 1760 Mir Qasim assigned to

it seems that the administration of the state was conducted by his grand-uncle Jagatesvara Bhanja and uncle Chakradhar Bhanja who sided with Rustam Jang and Mirza Baqr. It may be supposed that the author of *Riyazus-Salatin* took them to be the rulers of Mayurbhanj. Moreover, the authors of *Seir*, and *Salatin* do not agree on the point whether Mayurbhanj was thoroughly subdued before Alivardi fled to Bengal in anticipation of the Bargir invasion. The evidence of submission on the part of the ruler of Mayurbhanj is found only in the account of *Riyaz* which is not entirely trustworthy. Alivardi Khan's expedition to Orissa and subsequent Maratha inroads, in fact, gave the rulers of Mayurbhanj an opportunity of assuming independence which was more or less maintained till the British conquest of Orissa in 1803.

6. *Seir-Mutakherin*, Vol. II, pp. 590-91.

7. *Early European Travellers in the Nagpur Territories*, pp. 4-5.

the Company the Zamindari right of Midnapore District including Chakla Jellasore. This transfer of Midnapore was on the border of the Mayurbhanj state and included a few parganas in the Jungle Mahals for which the rulers of Mayurbhanj paid revenue to the fujdar of Midnapore, brought the two powers to a direct conflict. Damodar Bhanja after his accession came to know of the transfer of Midnapore to the Company and wrote to the Governor Vansittart that he "trusts that the officer sent to his quarter may be directed to transact all business personally with him",<sup>8</sup> Johnston, the first Resident of Midnapore was instructed to treat the Raja in a friendly manner.<sup>9</sup> This friendly relation was not interrupted till the 70's of the 18th century.

But various forces were working to disrupt the cordial alliance between the two powers. The warmth of friendship cooled down when the Company proceeded to settle revenue of the parganas in the Jungle Mahals belonging to the Mayurbhanj estate for which the Raja used to pay revenue to the fujdar of Midnapore. The British policy in the early years of settlement was to extort as much money as the Zamindars could yield.<sup>10</sup> By a gradual process they also endeavoured to take away from them the right of collecting extra imposts like road cess, tax on markets etc. And this settlement of land revenue was accomplished on the point of bayonet. The jungle Zamindars including the Mayurbhanj Raja tacitly agreed to this arrangement. Thus after the settlement of Ghatsila, Lieut. Fergusson, Commander of the settlement operations in the Jungle Mahals undertook the settlement of the revenue of Nayabasan belonging to the Raja of Mayurbhanj which annu-

8. Received 15 March 1761, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. I, No. 1020.

9. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 1112.

10 H. Verelst to J. Graham, Calcutta, 10 April 1766 ; and also from J. Graham to Ensign John Fergusson, Midnapore, 30 January 1767.



ally yielded Rs. 2,500/-.<sup>11</sup> Being summoned by a parwana Damodar Bhanja readily sent a Vakil to attend the Camp of Fergusson. The revenue of Nayabasan was settled by the Lieutenant at Rs. 4,200/- a year.<sup>12</sup> This settlement appears to have been revised by Edward Baber (1770-73), the Resident of Midnapore which enabled Alexander Higginson, Chief of Burdwan Committee of Revenue to conclude the 'makurrar' or fixed settlement with the Mayurbhanj Raja in November, 1776 at Rs. 5,175/-.<sup>13</sup> This amount was evidently a little more than double the amount (Rs. 2,500/-) paid by the Raja of Mayurbhanj before Fergusson's settlement. Damodar Bhanja for fear of being deprived of the estate of Nayabasan submitted to this exaction.<sup>14</sup> He even maintained friendly relations with the Company's Government by regularly paying the enhanced revenue from 1768 to 1776, in order to avoid possible incursions of the Marathas.<sup>15</sup> But he refused to sustain any further loss as soon as he realised that the Company's Government was more keen on maintaining friendly relations with the Marathas entrenched in Cuttack rather than helping him to get rid of them.<sup>16</sup>

He had another object in view. This was to recover possession of the Amarda and Belorachar estates from the clutches of the Company's Government. From T. Motte's

11. Firminger, W. K., (Ed.), Bengal District Records, Midnapur (1763-67), Vol. I, No. 150.

12. Statement of Damodar Bhanja (1784) enclosed in a letter of Dynely, to the Committee of Revenue, 15 July 1784.

13. Papers relating to the settlement of the forest tracts were deposited by Higginson in the Midnapore Collectorate.

14. Alexander Higginson to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings etc., Midnapore, 23 November 1776.

15. John Peiarce to the Governor-General-in-Council, Midnapore, 10 October 1779.

16. In 1784 the Company's Government was obliged to reduce the revenue at Rs. 3,200/- (Com. of Rev. to Dynely, Calcutta, 2 August, 1784 ; Collector of Midnapore to the Com. of Rev., 19 April 1785).

account it is learnt that when he travelled along the road to Orissa in 1766, the fort of Amardanagar or Amardagarh was included within the Mayurbhanj state.<sup>17</sup> But from the Company's records it appears that within a few years this Amarda estate with 81 villages and another Belorachar estate with 52 villages were annexed to the Company's dominion. This unlawful annexation was made by the Company's government prompted by a representation of the Choudhuries of Belorachar, a neighbouring Zamindar of Mayurbhanj. The Choudhuries of Belorachar in their representation claimed that those 81 villages, the fort of Amarda included originally formed part of pargana Belorachar and was seized by a Raja of Mayurbhanj before half a century.<sup>18</sup> His Vakil also admitted that the Mayurbhanj Raja had acquired possessory right over the estate by then but the origin of his possession was "the forcible dispossession of Odunund Roy and Roocedass, two Bhooeas or Managers, on the part of the Bellorichour Zamindar".<sup>19</sup> The Chaudhuries had then complained to Akram Khan, the then Nawab of Cuttack against this wrong. But the Nawab had allowed the Raja to retain its possession and had then dismissed the complaints.

In 1760-61 the transfer of territories of Midnapore and Jellasore was effected with the express injunction that no intermediate interests in the soil would be disturbed.<sup>20</sup> But in response to the complaint of the Chaudhuries in 1766-67 Watts, the Resident of Midnapore, restored the disputed villages of Belorachar and Amarda estates to the Chaudhuries. Damodar Bhanja then offered no resistance on the face of Maratha

17. *Early European Travellers etc.*, pp. 2-3.

18. The Vakil of the Raja of Mayurbhanj submitted a representation to the Committee of Revenue. In it the Raja's version of the history of the case is fully stated. (*Prog. Com. of Rev.*, 14 Nov. 1781).

19. Vide Mr. Shore's (The Acting President) report to the Committee of Rev., 14 March 1782.

20. *Boughton Rous, Landed Properties of Bengal etc.*, pp. 100-102.

menace and loyally followed the policy of 'festina lente' for a decade more.

In 1774 Damodar Bhanja made an endeavour to recover possession of the forts and estates<sup>21</sup> of Amarda by one of his tahsildars named Kamalalochan from Krishnaballav Chaudhury of Bhelorachar. The faujdar of Balasore representing the Maratha Government supported that Kamalalochan's contention. Gobardhan Barnaik, the Vakil of Damodar Bhanja claimed the farm of Belorachar with 52 villages. Kamalalochan was however, out of the Amarda estate with the British assistance and the Chaudhuries of Bhelorachar retained possession of it till March 1781.<sup>22</sup>

Due mainly to financial and partly to political reasons relation between the Company and the Bhonsle were strained in the early 60's of the 18th century. This provoked the Rajas of Orissa like Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal to revolt against this Maratha power and withheld payment of tribute claimed by the Maratha Governor of Cuttack.

The first serious attempt to realise the tribute from Damodar Bhanja was made by Bhaskar Pandit, the faujdar of Balasore in November, 1763.<sup>23</sup> This attempt failed. He was the younger brother of Sheo Bhatt, the then Governor of Orissa. Sheo Bhatt had to depute another high Maratha official, Roy Govind, to settle the affairs of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and other States early in January, 1764.<sup>24</sup> Roy

21. The incidents are narrated in a letter from Udaynarayan, Naib or Deputy Chief of Midnapore, addressed to his Chief Samuel Lewis, then stationed at Burdwan as a member of the Provincial Council of the Division of Burdwan, received by the latter on 17 June 1774.

22. Naib Oody Narrain to the Chief of Midnapore. Received 17 June 1774.

23. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 1948.

24. C.P.C., Vol. I, Nos. 2009-2010.

Govind met with no better success in Mayurbhanj though he overrun Mayurbhanj.<sup>25</sup>

Chamna Shau succeeded Sheo Bhatt as Governor of Orissa in April 1764.<sup>26</sup> Taking advantage of the pre-occupation of the Maratha army to quell disturbances in Dhenkanal the Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Nilgiri in league with the rebel foudjar Bhaskar Pandit began to plunder some of the parganas of Balasore district.<sup>27</sup> These atrocities were, suppressed, and the Zamindars were punished and Collections were also made from them for the maintenance of the Maratha troops.<sup>28</sup>

No detailed information regarding the suppression of the rebel Orissan Zamindars by the Maratha authorities was available. But from one of Bhawani Pandit's letters to the Governor, Verelst, it is known, that the former succeeded in extorting money from the Rajas of Orissa with which pacified the Maratha troops.<sup>29</sup> At this time the domestic trouble in Mayurbhanj emerged. Damodar Bhanja dispossessed his uncle Dasarathi Bhanja from Mayurbhanj who retired into Nilgiri. Dasarathi was joined by Jahan Mahmud, possibly the principal military Commander of Mayurbhanj. Damodar Bhanja being betrayed on all sides ran away to the pass of Bamanghati.<sup>30</sup>

After the dismissal from Governorship of Bhawani Pandit in 1768 Damodar heaved a sigh of relief. Janoji, on the advice of the British Vakil, Zainul Abedin<sup>31</sup> appointed Sambhaji Ganesh in his place with a view to extorting more money from the Rajas.<sup>32</sup> But Damodar Bhanja was inclined to send a

25. In a letter received by Governor Henry Vansittart on 21 February 1764, Damodar Bhanja "communicated the strocities committed by several people."

26. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 2173 and 2176.

27. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 2484.

28. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 2665.

29. Ibid, Vol. I, No. 2665.

30. Early European Travellers etc., p. 6.

31. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 712.

32. Ibid, Vol. II, No. 892.

proposal for a military alliance with the Company's Government. Shambhaji wanted to march his army and assert his claim to chauth of Bengal through actual battle and began military preparations. He requested Damodar Bhanja to assist him with provisions for his army but the latter declined. In alarm the Raja solicited British help and sent a Vakil.<sup>33</sup> The Raja was in arrears at that time in payment of his revenue. The Resident, thanked him but did not fail to press him for the arrears of revenue. Damodar Bhanja carried out his agreement with the Company loyally for about ten years in spite of the latter's refusal to recognise his claim to the Amarda estate. Meanwhile, Jagannath Dhal, the newly recognised Zamindar of Ghatsila, openly rebelled against the Company in protest against its revenue settlement. The Raja of Mayurbhanj could not keep himself aloof from this struggle and actively helped the rebels with the result that the Anglo-Mayurbhanj alliance was forever broken by the 70's of the century.

Towards the end of 1776 Alexander Higginson who was deputed by the Provincial Council of Burdwan to revise the settlement of the Jungle Mahals of Midnapore made the highest assessment on Nayabasan,<sup>34</sup> and recommended the reinstatement of Jagannath Dhal in Ghatsila. Nayabasan was not the biggest estate in the forest tracts. But Damodar Bhanja agreed to pay the highest rate of revenue only to conciliate the Company. The recommendations were readily accepted by the Governor-General in Council and a grave

33. Midnapore Records, Firminger, W. K. (Ed), Bengal District Records, Midnapore, Vol. II, No. 366. G. Vansittart, Collector of Midnapore to the Governor H. Verelst, 15 July 1768.

34. Annual Revenue : (a) Nayabasan—Rs. 5,175-13-0 ;  
 (b) Chatna—Rs. 2,288-7-12 ;  
 (c) Supur—Rs. 1,798/- ;  
 (d) Manbhum—Rs. 1,595-11-10 ;  
 (e) Barajit—Rs. 934-11-6 ;  
 (f) Baliabera—Rs. 886-5-10 ;

Vide G.G.P, 5260-1, O.C. 3 December, No. 10 (23 November 1776).

injustice to Damodar Bhanja was lost sight of.<sup>35</sup> But the restoration of Jagannath Dhal in Ghatsila marked a turning point in the history of Damodar Bhanja's relation with the Company. He could realise that resistance was more successful with the Company than the policy of submission which so long, he had pursued. He formally appealed for the minimisation of his revenue and then withheld payment of part of the revenue of Nayabasan.<sup>36</sup>

*Period of resistance and revolt against British rule*

There was no sign of improvement in the relation in 1780. Peiarce, the Resident sent a 'krokdar' to make collection of revenue directly from the tenants superseding Damodar Bhanja. But his attempts evidently failed as he could not procure the rent roll and accounts of tenants from the Raja's tahsildars. Peiarce had two alternatives before him, i.e., either to comply with the Raja's demands or to evict him out of the pargana under the threat of military pressure.<sup>37</sup> Damodar Bhanja not only stopped payment of revenue of Nayabasan fully. He began to commit criminal offences in the Company's territories<sup>38</sup>, and at the same time endeavoured to keep the Maratha Government satisfied. This was seen when Warren Hastings proposed to Madhoji Bhonsle of Nagpur on 8 December 1778, for opening a direct communication through the Mayurbhanj territory.<sup>39</sup> The Bhonsle Raja negatived the proposal by replying that he could not rely on the loyal co-operation of

35. O'Malley, L. S. S., *District Gazetteers, Singhbhum, Saraikela, Kharswan*, pp. 30-31.

36. Damodar Bhanja's case and the method he adopted for winning it, is fully explained by J. Peiarce, Collector of Midnapore in his letter of the 10 October 1779, to the Governor-General in Council.

37. Peiarce's letter to G.G. in C., 4 July 1780.

38. Peiarce's parwana letter to Damodar Bhanja of 5 June 1781.

39. C.P.C., Vol. V, No. 1233.

the Raja of Mayurbhanj.<sup>40</sup> Damodar Bhanja had stopped part payment of the Company's revenue but he suspended fully the payment of tribute claimed by any Maratha Government of Orissa, in league with other tributary states of Orissa like Dhenkanal.<sup>41</sup> The Bhonsle Raja evidently requested the Governor-General in Council to induce the Mayurbhanj Raja to pay his tribute regularly. In response to this appeal it is presumed, Warren Hastings warned Damodar Bhanja that "he should not expect any support from the Company." He also held out a threat that the latter (The Company) will join the Bhonsle in chastising him.<sup>42</sup>

Damodar Bhanja gave up all hope of receiving any support from the Company against the Marathas. He could no longer wait to recover his dispossessed mahals from the Company. Moreover, he was disposed not to exaggerate the consequences of a combination of Anglo-Bhonsle powers against him. As a last measure to recover possession of the Amarda estate he sent Vakil to Calcutta to make a representation to the Governor-General-in-Council. The case was referred to Peiarce, the then Collector of Midnapore who dismissed it summarily.<sup>43</sup>

Now the question arises why did Damodar Bhanja remain indifferent to a possible Anglo-Bhonsle combination against him and why did the Company's Government support the cause of the Bhonsle power? The explanation possibly lies in the political situation of India at that time. The formation of a Maratha Confederacy against the Company's Government, decline in power of the Bhonsle of Nagpur and the consequent revolt of the Orissan tributary states against it may tend to explain this attitude. In 1779 the Nizam, Hyder Ali of Mysore, the Peshwa and the Bhonsle formed a Confederacy

40. C.P.C., Vol. V, No. 1398.

41. Indian Historical Record Commission, 19th Session, 1942, pp. 162-63.

42. C.P.C., Vol. V, No 1479.

43. Mahurbunge Raja to the Collector of Midnapore, received on 4 August 1781.

to crush the British power in India.<sup>44</sup> Against this formidable combination the Bombay and Madras Governments had no adequate power and resources without help of the Bengal Presidency. So the Company's Government wisely enough thought that for a speedy march of soldiers from Bengal to Madras the Bhonsle power should at any rate be conciliated.<sup>45</sup> But the Company was not ready to help the Bhonsle in his financial stringency. Damodar Bhanja possibly could realise that it would not be possible at this stage for the Bhonsle to cement an 'entente cordiale' with the Company by antagonising the other members of the confederacy.

Damodar Bhanja took this opportunity and tendered his submission to Chimnaji Bapu and made his complaint about the occupation by the Chaudhuries of Bhelorchar of the Amarda estate with 81 villages. Consequently, the Marathas with the Mayurbhanj Raja crossed the Subarnarekha, attacked Fort Knox and began to plunder the countryside.<sup>46</sup> The Chaudhuries of Belorchar complained of this incident to the Collector of Midnapore on 22 March 1781.<sup>47</sup> Damodar Bhanja summoned the agents of the Zamindars before him for collecting money from the tenants. A section of the main road from Bengal to Orissa came under his possession with the result that the Company's officers were attacked by his men on 23 March 1781.<sup>48</sup>

This alliance between the Bhonsle power and the Mayurbhanj Raja prompted Warren Hastings to follow two calculated courses of action. One was a hectoring attitude towards the Raja of Mayurbhanj and the other was the conciliatory negotia-

44. Forrest, G. W., *Selections from the State Papers of the Governor-Generals of India. Warren Hastings*, Vol. 2, Oxford, 1910, pp. 200-201.

45. *Ibid*, II, p. 202.

46. Forrest, *Ibid*, II, pp. 242-43.

47. J. Peiarce to the Council of Revenue, Midnapore, 24 March 1781.

48. *The India Gazette Calcutta Public Advertiser* of April 4, 1781. Vide, *Bengal : Past and Present*, Vol. XLVI, p. 37.



tion with the Bhonsle power. Peiarce was asked to "inquire and report whether there were grounds for instituting judicial process against the Mayurbhanj Raja."<sup>49</sup> With regard to the Bhonsle they adopted a sympathetic attitude and endeavoured to form an entente.

The alliance was eventually patched up and Chimnaji retired from Cuttack early in 1781 after receiving the bribe of 12 lakhs of rupees for the expense of his army and ten lakhs of rupees as loan. This prompted Damodar Bhanja to resume open hostilities in the Company's territories early in June 1781 specially at a time when the Company was preoccupied with wars against the Indian powers of the Deccan.

Damodar Bhanja adopted various financial and military measures against the Company's Government. He suspended payment of revenue of the Nayabasan group of parganas. On June 3, starting from Ulmara he marched through the Company's territories and overran pargana Beliabera. He proceeded to the thana of Janpur but was repulsed with heavy slaughter and then took refuge in Nayabasan. Peiarce, the Resident at once sent Lieut. Broughton with a company of sepoys to reinforce the Janpur thanadar. He also asked Damodar Bhanja to show cause of his violence in Baliabera. To this Damodar Bhanja replied that as the Praharaj, the Zamindar of Beliabera, was under him, he had the right to punish him for his misbehaviour. But Peiarce pointed out that the Zamindar of Beliabera was not then under the Raja of Mayurbhanj but was "a malgoozardar of the Company."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Damodar Bhanja took possession by armed force of parganas Belorachar as well as three ghats of Rajghat, Multani and Rani Sarai. On 26 June 1781, the Council of

49. G.G. in C. to C. of Rev., Fort William, 25 May 1781 and the Committee of Revenue conveyed the instruction of the Government to the Collector of Midnapore on 30 May 1781.

50. Collector of Midnapore to the Council of Revenue, Midnapore, 9 June 1781, Encl. 2.

Revenue authorised the Collector to institute judicial proceedings against and recover from him the Company's territories by sending a troop under Major Mcpherson.<sup>51</sup>

From the middle of 1781 a new chapter was opened in the history of relationship of these two powers. On 12 July a summon was issued against Damodar Bhanja ordering him to answer the charges of having taken possession by armed force of 81 villages in Amarda and three ghats and manhandling the tenants of Baliabera.<sup>52</sup> As to the first charge Damodar Bhanja replied that for the insolent behaviour of the Praharaj, a subordinate tenant of the Raja, he had punished him. This assertion of Damodar Bhanja points to a fact that before the transfer of Zamindary right of Midnapore by Mir Qasim to the Company, the Zamindary right of Baliabera might have belonged to the Raja of Mayurbhanj which was repudiated after 1761 by the Company's Government. As to the second charge i.e., his occupation of 81 villages he attributed it to the orders of Chimnaji Babu and alleged that Raja Ram Pant had procured the approval of Governor-General in Council at Calcutta of this action. Not being satisfied with this answer Lieut. Mac Gregor was despatched from Midnapore on the morning of 18 July with a Company of sepoys (130). He was instructed to proceed to Patpur, the office of the Tahashildar of Belorachar, and after recovering the villages from Damodar Bhanja he was to put Nyan Ghosh, the Tahasildar of the parganas,<sup>53</sup> in charge of the revenue collection. The Raja offered no opposition, but waited at the Amarda fort with

51. Extract and Prog. of the Governor General in Council and the Committee of Rev., 26 June 1781.

52. Collector of Midnapore to the President etc. Members of the Committee of Revenue, Midnapore, 25 July 1781.

53. Lt. Mac. Gregor's account of the operation against Damodar Bhanja is contained in Major Macpherson's letter of the 24 July 1781 to Peiarce based on a letter that the former received from the Lieutenant on the date.

about three hundred followers. He was repulsed with heavy slaughter. Lieut. Mac Gregor's hope of clearing out the Raja and his followers,<sup>54</sup> also on the other hand, proved futile. Damodar Bhanja adopted the guerilla method of warfare. Mac Gregor's all efforts to protect the pargana proved futile before the numerical strength of Damodar Bhanja.

On 27 July the Mayurbhanj forces advanced to Rani Sarai but were compelled to withdraw. The Raja was always ready to come to terms. On 28 July Damodar Bhanja sent a vakil to Lieut. Mac Gregor's camp for a hasty cessation of hostilities. Mac Gregor agreed also not to molest the Raja if he would remain within his country. But Mayurbhanj could not be a "satiated country" as no settlement in respect of Amarda could be reached which would be acceptable to Damodar Bhanja. So on 29 July about 800 men belonging to the Mayurbhanj Raja again advanced towards the British post (Patpur) but retreated after a heavy loss.<sup>55</sup> This victory proved illusory as he found "ammunition was nearly expended and the Maratha bargirs had to the Raja's assistance." Lieut. Mac Gregor, therefore, found it absolutely necessary to fall back upon the banks of the Subarnarekha to procure provisions and a supply of ammunition from Fort Knox. In the meantime Capt. Fenwick with 150 common soldiers, joined Mac Gregor's detachment on 31 July. Another detachment with twenty barrels of ammunition to Fort Knox was reserved in case Capt. Fenwick should want them. Damodar Bhanja appealed for an armistice and an enquiry into his complaints.<sup>56</sup> Damodar had reoccupied Amarda after the retreat of Mac Gregor and on 3 August 1781, Fenwick and Lieut. Cunningham attacked the fort from two sides. The fort surrendered and the Mayurbhanj forces withdrew from the area for the time

54. The Collector of Midnapore to the President etc. members of the Committee of Revenue, 25 July 1781.

55. J. Peiarce, Collector of Midnapore to the Committee of Revenue, 3 August 1781.

56. J. Peiarce to the Council of Revenue, 5 August 1781.

being.<sup>57</sup> When Fenwick returned to Patpur after the capture of Amarda, to his utter astonishment he found the place empty; its inhabitants all followed the enemy on his retreat. He considered the expulsion of Damodar Bhanja and his forces from Belorachar an impossible task. The hostility of the inhabitants, want of provisions and the climate of the pernicious rainy season with its attendant death-warrant, malaria added to his difficulties. According to the strategy Capt. Fenwick marched for Kanpur, Rani Sarai and Multani on 4 August but found no trace of the enemy. After the evacuation of the Amarda fort, Damodar Bhanja retired to Khuntia, a village within the neighbouring pargana of Narangabaj.<sup>58</sup> So Fenwick postponed the idea of marching to Belorachar.<sup>59</sup>

Since the beginning of Military operations of the Company's troops for the recovery of the occupied portion of pargana Belorachar, Damodar Bhanja had been writing to the Military officers and the Collector of Midnapore for settling the dispute amicably. The Collector temporised, opened avenues for fresh negotiations and asked the Raja to represent his case. Damodar Bhanja left Khuntia, returned to Hariharpur, but did not demobilise his troops. The Collector of Midnapore also wrote to Nana Rao Mukunda, the foudar of Balasore, to punish the Bhanja Raja for his violence in the Company's territories. The matter was then seriously taken up by the faujdar who proceeded to Calcutta to see the Governor-General himself. But as Warren Hastings was away from Calcutta he returned to Balasore and sent a reply to the President, Committee of Revenue.<sup>60</sup> The Committee of Revenue summoned the

57. The same to the Committee of Revenue, 6 August 1781.

58. J. Peiarce, Collector of Midnapore to the Committee of Revenue, 14 August 1781.

59. Ibid, 7 August 1781. Damodar Bhanja began to send raiding parties to Belorachar to prevent the tenants from resettling from Khuntia.

60. Committee of Revenue to the Board of Revenue, 5 November 1781.

Kanungoe of Jallasore to appear with official accounts and records.<sup>61</sup>

The Vakil of the Raja of Mayurbhanj submitted a representation to the Committee of Revenue. It contained the Raja's version of the history of acquisition of Amarda Zamindary with adjoining 81 villages.<sup>62</sup> The Committee of Revenue entrusted inquiry into the dispute to Shore, the Acting President. Shore in his report on 14 March 1782 agreed that the Mayurbhanj Raja had a possessory right over the Amarda estate for a long time. The other point at issue is, whether the revenue of this estate is payable to the Maratha Government or to the Company. The Raja of Mayurbhanj was inclined to affirm the former proposal and the Bhelorachar Zamindar the latter. The 'moharir' of the office of the Kanungoe of Jellasore denied the existence of any document referring to Mayurbhanj Raja's holding in farm the Amarda Zamindary as part of the Belorachar from the early British rulers and the Kanungoe in his letter of address said that "I find the Bellorachar Vaqueels' Representation is totally groundless."<sup>63</sup> Thus if the Amarda estate belonged to the Raja of Mayurbhanj the Maratha power which acknowledged its right would get the revenue. And if no record is available to the contrary the decision should be made in favour of the Bhanja Raja. But hopelessly enough, in his report Shore showed disinclination to come to any decision and thus left the issue unsettled.<sup>64</sup>

It was now the turn of Jonathan Duncan, who prepared the Reports to come to a decision. In this report (11 July, 1782) he attached no importance to the fact that the Mayurbhanj Raja had a prescriptive right over the estate but accepted

61. Resolution of the Committee of Revenue, 12 November 1781.

62. Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue, 14 November 1781.

63. Report of Shore, the Acting President of the Committee of Revenue, 14 March 1782.

64. The G.G. in C. to the Committee of Revenue, 26 April 1782.

the questionable evidence of the Vakil of Bhelorachar regarding its mode of acquisition. Moreover, he made the greatest blunder in confusing 52 villages of Bhelorachar pargana with 81 villages of the Amarda estate. The fact is that during the residency of Hugh Watts before 1764, Belorachar pargana with 52 villages was given in farm to Mayurbhanj Raja for a annual revenue of Rs. 1,036/-. But the pleader of Bhelorachar Zamindar asserted before Shore that the Bhanja Raja got 81 villages of the Amarda estate in farm promising to pay enhanced revenue. The Mayurbhanj Vakil denied the assertion positively. But Duncan wisely enough confused the two issues and come to the conclusion that as the entire Bhelora-char with 52 villages, and Amarda Zamindary with 81 villages, were given in farm to Damodar Bhanja replacing the Bhelora-char Zamindar then the revenue would be payable to the Company and not to the Marathas. The Mayurbhanj Vakil did not accept this contention. Moreover, from 1767 to 1771, if a Kanungo was appointed at Jellasore then it must have been the duty of his office to keep the accounts of rent paid by the farmers. Duncan could not add a suitable solution of the question, as to why the accounts were not available.

But as the report was suitable to the best interest of the Company the decision of the Board of Revenue was quick and decisive. In their Resolution of 13 July 1782, they stated that the revenue of the Amarda estate belonged to the Company's Government. Moreover, Damodar Bhanja got his second rebuff when the possession of 52 villages of pargana Belorachar on payment of a fixed rent was rejected. The Governor-General-in-Council observed that they could not dispossess Zamindars who were the immediate subjects of the Company's Government "to gratify a vassal who has been so lately in actual rebellion against it". The Balasore foudar and Mudhaji, the Bhonsle Raja were also informed of this decision and were

asked to keep the Mayurbhanj Raja under proper subjection by placing him under one power.<sup>65</sup>

Damodor Bhanja tacitly postponed his fight for the recovery of the Amarda estate for the time being. But first he undertook the task of recovering the village Mauldangry which, according to him, was included in pargana Ulmara, but had been annexed to pargana Danton by Harikishen Choudhury, its Zamindar, situated on the western bank of the Subarnarekha. When the Company's troops withdrew from the territory the Bhanja Raja caused havoc in the villages.<sup>66</sup> But it is not known what steps were taken by the Collector of Midnapore for the protection of the pargana Danton. In 1783 the Zamindar of Bogri revolved and the neighbouring jungle Zamindars became restive. Damodar Bhanja again hastened to help them in creating disturbances and preventing the loyal Zamindars from realising rent from the tenants as he did on the 70's by protecting the Ghatsila Raja. A battalion of sepoys was sent to thana Balarampur under Capt. Vincent to quell the disturbances.<sup>67</sup>

Since long before the period of Permanent Settlement Damodar Bhanja had been making part payment of revenue of Nayabasan. The other neighbouring Zamindars were now induced to remain in arrears. The Governor-General in Council advised the Committee of Revenue (15 December 1783) to carry on retributive measures against the Mayurbhanj Raja. Being informed of the advance of the Company's troops to Janpur under Capt. Vincent, Damodar agreed to pay revenue "as far as his abilities enabled him."<sup>68</sup> But before the negotiation was finalised Capt. Vincent was transferred. Damodar

65. C.P.C., VI, 555-556, despatched by Hastings, 15 July 1782.

66. Committee of Revenue to the Collector of Midnapur, 7 November 1782.

67. Dyneley, Collector of Midnapur to the Committee of Revenue, 25 November 1783.

68. Capt. H. Vincent to J. Dyneley, 19 December 1783.

Bhanja got the opportunity to carry on depredations. The Raja married by force the daughter of Bhubanmayee, Zamindar of Keearchandeepta under thana Janpur, took possession of the pargana and carried off the cattles and other means of cultivation. He also entered into negotiations with Lieut. Radcliffe. Early in March 1784, Damodar proposed that he would pay annually Rs. 1,700/- for Nayabasan and his balance be excused. The Committee of Revenue then did not take this proposal seriously. Again on 15 July Damodar Bhanja "after being closely pressed and threatened by Dyneley" submitted a Wazib-ul-Ars (petition) proposing fresh terms of settlement of Nayabasan and other outstanding grievances. The terms of peace are :

- (1) Annual Revenue of Nayabasan be fixed at Rs. 3,200/- and all arrears be struck off with the exception of that for last year for which the Raja will pay Rs. 3,200/- ;
- (2) Delivery of possession of 84 (81) villages attached to form Amarda forcibly retained by the Zamindars of pargana Belorachar and restoration of pargana Belorachar with 52 villages in farm ;
- (3) Restoration of mouza Mauldangry in pargana Ulmira.<sup>69</sup>

The Committee of Revenue on 2 August 1784, agreed to the proposal of payment of an annual revenue of Rs. 3,200/- for Nayabasan.

But they could not come to any resolution regarding the Raja's claim to 81 villages of the Amarda Zamindary and the other major issues.

Damodar Bhanja could not accept this arrangement and was again up in arms. He "pertinaciously" withheld his revenue. This unabled Dinabandhu Cower, Damodar's Sardar-Tahasildar (the head of the paik-militia as well as rent-Collector) at Nayabasan to take the opportunity to resume predatory activities in the neighbouring pargana of Barajit. Peiarce,

69. Petition of Damodar Bhanja to the Committee of Revenue with Dyneleys letter of 15 July 1784.



the Collector of Midnapore demanded explanation of his activities. The peon, carrying the summon to Damodar was stopped on the way. In 1785 Damodar Bhanja had to face simultaneous attacks of two enemies. The Bhonsle felt the pressing need for money to wage wars in the home-front whereas many of the Orissan Kings had suspended payment of revenue. So early in 1785 in order to compel the Raja to pay his tribute to the Maratha Government invaded Mayurbhanj and after extracting money they left Hariharpur.<sup>70</sup> Then the Company's troops under Lieut. Dickins crossed the Subarnarekha and encamped at Gopiballavpur close to the fort of Nayabasan. The thanadar of Janpur was ordered to take direct charge of the collection of rents of Nayabasan superseding the Raja's sardars and paiks and on behalf of the Company a crokdar was appointed. This alarmed Damodar Bhanja who was financially burdened. He promised Peiarce to pay the revenue at an early date and requested him to recall troops from Gopiballavpur, as otherwise that part of the pargana would be ruined.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, Damodar Bhanja again endeavoured to restore possession of Amarda estate when he felt that favourable wind had been blowing. He also strengthened his position by enlisting support of the Maratha Subedar. Chauvet was appointed Resident of Jellasore under the Collector of Midnapore to collect revenue of the area properly and to maintain cordiality with the Marathas. Rajaram Pandit dissatisfied with Duncan's decision requested Hastings to restore 81 villages of Amarda to Damodar as its revenue would be payable to the Marathas.<sup>72</sup> Damodar also claimed the restoration of the Zamindary.<sup>73</sup> But Chauvet advised him to remain satisfied

70. Collector of Midnapur to the Committee of Revenue, 19 April 1785.

71. Lieut Burnet to J. Peiarce, Nayabasan, May 25, 1785.

72. C.P.C. Vol. VI, No. 1242.

73. Chauvet's letter to the Committee of Revenue, 16 June 1785.

and informed the Board of Damodar Bhanja's seeking military help of the Marathas to restore Amarda estate. Within one month the fort and villages might have been reconquered by Damodar Bhanja (16 July 1785) but the Collector of Midnapur ordered Major Macpherson, commanding the troops at Midnapore "to take possession of such districts" as were possessed by the Mayurbhanj Raja forcibly. After 16 July 1785 no information about the events from the records is available for about one and a half year. But there is evidence to show that in the struggle that followed reoccupation of the Amarda Zamindary by force in 1785, Damodar Bhanja succeeded in retaining possession of at least a considerable portion of it.<sup>74</sup>

Since the middle of the 80's the political and economic situation in the Jungle Mahals had become gloomy. An element of discontent had already clouded the last phase of relationship between Damodar Bhanja and the Company. Damodar Bhanja began to play tricks with the payment of revenue of Nayabasan. Being hard pressed he made his payment to the Company but suspended payment when the pressure was relaxed. This pressure reached its climax when the Company's troops began to devastate Gopiballavpur, the seat of the Mohantas, the Bhanja Rajas being their disciples. The pargana was made khas and a temporary Revenue-Collector was appointed. This compelled the Raja to seek terms of negotiation which were ultimately turned down.<sup>75</sup> The Collector then settled lands in farm to Jagannath Ghosh, the Chief Tahasildar of the Nayabasan Zamindar at an increased revenue. But Jagannath Ghosh could not realise

74. A sanad by Damodar donating a plot of land in mouza Amardagarh to a Utkal brahmin, Sudai Mishra of San 1195 shows that the estate was in possession of Damodar in 1788-89.

75. The Collector writes to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue on 19 November 1786. In June 1786 the Governor-General in Council delegated its powers as Revenue Board to a separate Board of Revenue consisting of a President and five other members that superseded the Committee of Revenue.

rents from the ryots and could not pay up the arrears of revenue. Ballyar Singh, a chuar chief of Galacuttea, and a tenant of Raja of Mayurbhanj revolted and carried on depredations making it impossible for Jagannath to collect rent or to carry on peaceful cultivation by newly settled tenants on a fixed jamma.<sup>76</sup> Armed force was sent to quell the agrarian disturbances and to reinforce the Janpur thanadar. It may be inferred from the scanty records available that Damodar Bhanja might have recovered possession of the area.

But the success in one front encouraged him to resume hostilities on the other. He resumed depredations in villages belonging to Harikishan Chowdhury, Zamindar of pargana Danton and carried off different means of agricultural products.<sup>77</sup> Lord Cornwallis ordered to open fire on the depredators and Damodar Bhanja failed to recover Mauldangry.<sup>78</sup>

But this incident had its repercussions. In about 1792 two other chuar sardars of Galacuttea, Kishen Singh and Arjun Singh, both subordinate land-holders under Damodar, created disturbances in Nayabasan. Damodar Bhanja was compelled to inform the Collector of Midnapur that unless those chuar sardars were suppressed the rent could not be collected. The Collector sent a contingent of sepoy under an Indian officer but they proved unsuccessful. Then Lieut. Collins commanded the troops and the chuar sardars fled away. The Raja of Mayurbhanj also sent some of his paiks to co-operate with the Company's forces.<sup>79</sup>

But as the chuar sardars could not be arrested a criminal case was instituted against Damodar Bhanja and a warrant for his arrest was issued. The answer to this resolution of

76. The Collector of Midnapore to John Stables, President and Members of the Board of Revenue, Midnapore, 19 Nov. 1786.

77. C. Burrowes, Collector of Midnapore, to John Shore, President etc. Members of the Board of Revenue, Midnapore, 13 April, 1789.

78. Governor-General-in-Council to John Shore, President etc. Members of the Board of Revenue, Fort William, 29 April 1789.

79. Acting Collector of Midnapore to W. Cowper, 18 January 1793.

Damodar Bhanja was open war. It is not known from the records who was the complainant and what were the charges against the Raja. But it is evident that the Raja fled away from his capital and created tension in the neighbourhood.<sup>80</sup> The official records were full of complaints against "the general notoriety of his character". Nayabasan pargana was attached but Damodar did not deliver its possession. The Collector seized all the moveables in the Raja's residence at Barikoshi near Midnapore. Damodar engaged an attorney, William Ledlie, to recover his moveable properties and to plead his innocence. The attempts proved futile. Damodar Bhanja abandoned Nayabasan pargana and made preparations for the defence of his country. Some of the Company's sepoy also joined him.<sup>81</sup> The chuars who enjoyed so long chakran lands carried on depredations in parganas Nayabasan itself to terrorise the tenants and force them to abandon their homes. A Maratha army again invaded Mayurbhanj to subdue Damodar Bhanja towards the end of 1795 or early in 1796 and was repulsed with heavy loss.<sup>82</sup> In 1796 Damodar Bhanja died after securing complete independence for his small state from the clutches of the Bhonsle and the Company's Government.<sup>83</sup>

*Period of reconciliation and pacification*

The death of Damodar Bhanja brought about a complete reversal in the Mayurbhanj politics as well as in the relations

80. The letter of 15 March 1793 from the Acting Collector of Midnapore to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue.

81. The tahashildar of Janpur writes in an arzee to the Collector of Midnapore forwarded by the letter to the Board of Revenue with his letter of 23 November 1795.

82. A memoir of 30 August 1804 of Capt. Thomas Morgan, then Commanding at Balasore. "... during the Rauje of the late Damodar Bhanja ; and about 18 years ago Rajah Ram Pandit, Subah of Cuttack, marched from thence with a large force, invaded Mayurbhanj".

83. The Collector of Midnapore to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue, Fort William, 7 April 1796.

between the two powers. The Collector in a series of letters kept the Resident and Members of the Board of Revenue informed about the internal condition of Mayurbhanj. Rani Sumitra assumed supreme power after her husband's death and Bairagy Bhanja, a relation became her Manager.<sup>84</sup> After her accession Rani Sumitra lost no time in applying for the settlement of Nayabasan pargana. But before she was granted a settlement a complication arose within the palace.<sup>85</sup> Damodar Bhanja died without a male issue. He had decided to adopt a son of Balabhadra Bhanja, the Raja of Keonjhar. Balabhadra sent one of his sons during Damodar's life time but this son died on his way to Mayurbhanj. Before another son was sent to Mayurbhanj Damodar died. After his death Balabhadra personally came to Hariharpur with one of his sons Tribikram Bhanja and persuaded Sumitra Devi to acknowledge him as her heir and to mark him 'Tika' on the forehead as a sign of investiture.

But the Rani on various pretexts put off the ceremony of installing him for a long time. Balabhadra then arrested and imprisoned the Rani's servants and advisers making the position of the Rani helpless. One of the servants, Jagabandhu Pattanayak secured his release and arrived at Balasore to complain against the Raja of Keonjhar. The foudar perceiving that the union of the Zamindaries of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in the same family would be ruinous to the best interests of the Maratha Government, sent a contingent of troops under Mooteeram (Motiram) Dadu<sup>86</sup> to expel Balabhadra who had

84. 28 May 1796, the Collector to the Board of Revenue.

85. Letter of Ernst, the acting Judge and Collector of Midnapur of the 25 November 1803 based on a report submitted by the Agent who had been sent to Gopiballavpur to bring about a reconciliation between Rani Sumitra Bhanja and her adopted son, Tikayet Tribikram Bhanja in the presence of the Goswami Tribikramananda. The Agent's name was Vaidyanath Choudhury.

86. The deposition of Agni Patnaik of Keonjhar cited as a witness by Tribikram Bhanja, before the Commissioners. This Matiram Dadu

meanwhile began to murder her principal servants. Before the Marathas could reach Mayurbhanj Balabhadra by threat of coercion compelled the Rani to hold the 'Tika' ceremony and to recognise him as the heir and adopted son. Balabhadra and his son were, however, compelled by the Marathas to leave the capital and he died very soon.<sup>87</sup>

Having consolidated her position in the gadi (throne) of Mayurbhanj in 1800 Rani Sumitra obtained permanent settlement of Nayabasan. In the same year she procured a sanad from Raghuji Bhonsle in her Zamindary on condition of regular payment of tribute which her husband never paid to the Bhonsle Government regularly.

Legal recognition of Sumitra's accession by superior powers did not strengthen the Queen's position materially. Very soon Janardan Bhanja of Keonjhar state invaded Mayurbhanj to place his brother Tribikram Bhanja on the throne.<sup>88</sup> The Rani was overpowered and taken a prisoner to Keonjhar. She was later on freed on condition that she would accept her adopted son as her heir to the exclusion of others. But when the Rani

is evidently the same as Moetlal Baubo named by Ernst who invaded Mayurbhanj and expelled Balabhadra Bhanja.

87. But this story of Tribikram's adoption differs from other evidences of official accounts. In 1813 a Commission was appointed to consider the claims of Rani Champa, one of the Junior Wives of Damodar. Before the commission a sanad of 1803 October from Ekoji Sukdeo to Tribikram Bhanja was presented before the Commission which mentioned that "Both the above women (Rani Sumitra & Yamuna Devi) conferred the Teekah of succession on the son of Bulbudder Bhunje. Tribikram who(m) Damooder Bunje had previously adopted and conferred on him the Teekah, as the son of his brother". From the deposition of Agni Patnaik from Keonjhar and other evidences like that of a historical memoir transmitted by Capt. Morgan who occupied Balasore on 22 September 1803, the Commissioners J. Richardson and W. C. Ward arrived at the conclusion that Tribikram was adopted by Damodar during his lifetime and was reinvested by Rani Sumitra by the coercion of Balabhadra.

88. Ernst's letter, 25 November 1803.

reached her territories she sent Tribikram to Uparbhadg, secretly applied to faujdar of Balasore for help and herself fled to Gopiballavpur never to return before 1803.<sup>89</sup> Tribikram also in his flight took refuge with a dependent Zamindar of Mayurbhanj and offered terms of settlement with the Marathas and the Company simultaneously.

In view of the commencement of the Second Maratha War in 1803 apprehending that the Marathas might enter Midnapore through Mayurbhanj and the Jungle Mahals it was advised to conciliate the frontier Zamindars and to persuade them to join the Company.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly Rani Sumitra received assurance of protection by the Company and the demand for arrears of her revenue was suspended<sup>91</sup> on condition of her helping the Company against the Marathas.<sup>92</sup> The Company's government also wanted to keep Trivikram Bhanja in good humour lest he should join the Marathas.<sup>93</sup> The Collector sent Baidyanath Cahudhury as a mediator between the Rani and the Tikayet and wrote a letter to the mohanta of Gopiballavpur to clear up the misunderstanding. Baidyanath appealed to both of them to compose the quarrel but the Rani would not yield. The Collector was in favour of giving the estate to the Tikayet as he was informed that the Tikayet might join the Marathas.<sup>94</sup> But the report of Govinda Ram who was in charge of the Dak

89. There is a difference between the narration of Ernst with that of Capt. Morgan.

90. Acting Magistrate of Midnapore Ernst to John Lumsden, Chief Secretary to the Government, Midnapore, 8 September 1803. Vide : Rai Bahadur R. P. Chanda—Selections from official letters and records relating to the Hist. of Mayurbhanj, Vol. I, No. 189.

91. R. P. Chanda, Nos. 190-191.

92. Ibid, No. 192.

93. Ibid, No. 195.

94. Ibid, No. 204. From T. H. Ernst, one of the Commissioners for the affairs of Cuttack to John Lumsden, Chief Secretary to Government, Zilla Midnapore, 25 November 1803.

of Jellasore<sup>95</sup> and Ernst's letter of 24 September 1803,<sup>96</sup> show that Tribikram Bhanja was really at war with the faujdar of Balasore over the possession of Khuntaghat. So the negotiation of the Tikayet carried on through 'Shambhu' Bharati Gossain with the faujdar of Cuttack for securing a sanad for the possession of 'Mayurbhanj' cannot be construed as intrigue against the Company. It might have been carried on by the Raja of Keonjhar on behalf of his brother, the Tikayet. After the conclusion of the treaty of Deogaon, however, Rani Sumitra was called upon by the Board of Commissioners in the month of December 1803 to resume the management of her estate of Mayurbhanj proper.<sup>97</sup> Available records throw no light on what exactly happened between Tribikram and the Rani after the restoration of the Gadi to her. But two Persian letters, in the record room of Baripada and the statement produced by Raja Tribikram Bhanja to the Commissioners to enquire into the claims of Rani Champa Devi in 1813 show that he was imprisoned by the Rani. By Morgan's intervention he was released and expelled from Mayurbhanj, he remained in exile in Keonjhar for over five years till he was recalled to ascent the Gadi on the eve of the Rani's demise.<sup>98</sup>

95. Ibid, No. 189. Extract of Secret Consultation, Fort William, 8 September 1803, Stark Collection.

96. Ibid, No. 195.

97. Ibid, Nos. 220, 221.

98. Ibid, Nos. 287, 288, pp. 339-403.



## *Chapter V*

### **THE ANGLO-BHONSLE RELATIONS ( 1760-1803 )**

In 1751 Alivardi Khan assigned to Raghuji I the revenues of Orissa and parts of present Midnapur district. The Marathas in course of time became virtually the masters of the ceded district. So long as the Bhonsle's army i.e., bargirs were powerful the politico-economic activities of the south-western Bengal were controlled by and for the interest of the Bhonsle. But the history of the Anglo-Bhonsle relations of the period 1760 to 1803 reveals the gradual decline of the power of the Bhonsle over Orissa and the adjoining territories in Midnapur. During this period, the British grip over the south-western Bengal was consolidated and the Bhonsle maintained their hold over this area by means of their military strength. This process of replacement of the Bhonsle by that of the British power in that region may be studied in three stages. First, the period from 1751 to 1772 witnessed the endeavour of the Bhonsle rulers to exercise a centralised authority over the Orissan Governors. They considered Orissa and the adjacent territories of Midnapur and the Jungle Mahals as a happy hunting ground for money which they needed badly for maintaining their precarious but independent existence in Nagpur against the pretensions of the Peshwa and the Nizam. The Company's refusal to pay chauth, its early revenue arrangements in the border areas and its monopoly business in tobacco, betelnut and salt in this region seriously disturbed the economic life of the Maratha territories and bewildered the money-thirsty Maratha faujdars of Cuttack. In the second stage (1772-1786) the Nagpur Bhonsle rulers wasted their strength on domestic troubles and in the wars fought for maintaining their precarious existence against the formidable league of the Nizam and the Peshwa. At this stage Warren Hastings being determined to stand forth as Diwan of Bengal strengthened

the frontier territories by chastising the zamindars like those of Mayurbhanj, Ghatsila and Singhbhum etc. and conciliating the Maratha faujdars of Cuttack by reward of 12 lakhs of rupees as chauth. His conciliatory policy towards the Bhonsle had the object of creating a British subsidised rival power against the hostile Peshwa and his regent Nana Phadnavis. But with the departure of Warren Hastings in February, 1785, and the accession of more independent spirited Raghuji Bhonsle II in 1786 the Governor-General's policy was revised. The reports of successive British Residents of Nagpur like Forrester (1788), Leckie (1790), Blunt (1793) and of Colebrooke (1799-1801) revealed the creeping degeneration of the Bhonsle power and their inability to maintain a huge army of bargirs when the scope of foreign adventures had considerably been narrowed by the consolidation of the British grip over Bengal as well as the distant parts of India. The decline of the nizamat and the consequent reorganisation of the thanadary system in Bengal had only the effect of strengthening the criminal elements in the frontier. Moreover, economic crisis arising out of complete suppression of the inland trade subsisting between Orissa and Bengal, gradual pauperisation of the independent peasantry leading to rapid transplantation of population and the Company's revenue experiments in the frontier region resulted in sporadic outbreaks and anarchical conditions. These events were finally put a stop to in 1803 by the annexation of Orissa and the consequent introduction of revenue settlements there.

### *Political Background*

The above observations may be considered in some details phase by phase. Alivardi Khan assigned to the Marathas in 1751 the surplus revenues of Orissa<sup>1</sup> to pay off the

1. Seir-Mutakherin, Vol. II, pp. 590-91. The river Sonāmakiā or Subarnarekha which runs near Balasore was to form demarcating line between the boundaries of Orissa and Bengal.

arrear salary of Raghuji's soldiers. He also agreed to pay Raghuji twelve lakhs of rupees as chauth on condition that the Marathas would not set their foot within the dominions of Alivardi.<sup>2</sup> Mir Habib was appointed the deputy-governor of Orissa which virtually came under the clutches of the Bhonsle. Moreover, some south-western territories of Midnapur, such as, Patashpur, Kamardachour, Gopiballavpur were also included within the assigned territories.<sup>3</sup> Thus surplus revenues of Orissa and the agreed chauth of 12 lakhs of rupees were the main sources of income of the Bhonsle and their vast army<sup>4</sup> for maintaining their very existence in Central India.

Money was necessary for waging constant wars against the Peshwa and the Nizam. And the wars were fought almost incessantly between the contending powers, which ultimately exhausted their own strength and at last succeeded in creating a vacuum in Central India only to afford opportunity to the British to occupy that place. After 1751 the Bhonsle power ceased to expand, and in 1755 Raghuji I died leaving his sons to fight among themselves. So 1755 may be regarded as the beginning of the end of the Bhonsle influence in this region. The next ruler, Janoji also joined in intrigues against the Peshwa and the Nizam which secured him the lasting enmity of both.<sup>5</sup> In 1769 Nagpur was plundered and the Bhonsle was compelled to acknowledge his subordination to the Peshwa by the agree-

2. Ibid, II, p. 591. It has been further explained that the sum of 12 lakhs of rupees should be remitted in two instalments in every six months to Benaras either through Jagat Sett or Raja Swarup Chand as Raghuji would think proper. C.P.C., II, No. 1247, pp. 331-32.

3. Sier, Vol. II, pp. 590-91.

4. His standing force was about 15,000 but liable to be augmented every year according to the exigencies of the moment. Vide Jenkin's report (1826), p. 56. Kincaid, C. A. and Parasnis D. B. (Vol. II, p. 274) say that Raghuji the Great led 50,000 men into the Carnatic in 1740 A.D.

5. Grant Duff, *History of Marathas*, Vol. I, (Ed) S. M. Edwardes, Calcutta, 1912, p. 547.

ment of Kankapur.<sup>6</sup> This humiliation he could not retrieve until his death in 1772.<sup>7</sup>

The heavy demand for money prompted the Bhonsle rulers to control the faujdars of Orissa and sacked them whenever they failed to remit the revenue of the Orissa territories as well as the chauth of Bengal in time to Nagpur. Thus on 4 September 1752, Mir Habib was murdered.<sup>8</sup> Mirza Saleh, the next governor of Orissa, was also forced to resign in 1759 as he could not quence the monetary thirst of the Bhonsle rulers.

The preoccupations of the Bhonsle in the Central India, in spite of his best endeavours to keep tight the Cuttack faujdar in hand, considerably diminished his influence in the Orissan territories and exhausted his treasury for which he had to borrow money from the money-lenders.<sup>9</sup> Mirza Saleh, the Governor of Orissa conciliated both Raghuji and Alivardi so long as they were alive. But his demand for chauth to please his Maratha master provoked discontent of his Mahommedan overlord.<sup>10</sup> He obstructed the British Trade in Orissa for extracting money for the Marathas.<sup>11</sup> This prompted the Company to keep Mirza reconciled and in good humour. In return to keep them in hand Mirza Saleh gave them right to trade dutyfree.<sup>12</sup> Both he and his son Dadar Ali could not send to the Bhonsle of Nagpur the chauth and the revenue of Orissa regularly during those troubled years of 1757-60 and

6. Sardesai, G. S. (Ed.), *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* (Marathi), Vol. XX, p. 257; Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 561.

7. S.P.D., XX, 300-301.

8. *Seir Mutakherin*, Vol. II, pp. 592-93; *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, p. 360.

9. Vaidya, S. L. (Ed.), *A Selection of Papers from the Records of Vaidya Family*, *Vaidya Daftar*, Vol. 5, L.N. 16, July 14, 1750, L.N. 57, February 24, 1756.

10. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 1244.

11. Home Department, *Public Proceedings*, 19 October 1753, (Balaramgarhi L.N. 80); *Ibid*, *Public Proceedings*, 21 November 1754 and 23 December 1754.

12. Home Dept. *Public Progs.*, 10 July 1755. Balaramgarhi L.N. 58.

this was enough for their discharge from office by the dissatisfied Bhonsle,<sup>13</sup> because at that time the Bhonsle ruler was pathetically in need of money to pay up his debts.<sup>14</sup> In 1760 Sheo Bhatt Sathe came to Orissa to realise the outstanding dues, went to Murshidabad to regain the fort of Barabati from Fathe Khan and to demand Bengal's chauth.<sup>15</sup> Sheo Bhatt threatened to invade Bengal if chauth was not paid but Mir Qasim remained silent.<sup>16</sup> Sheo Bhatt proceeded to plunder Birbhum. The Company stationed troops at Midnapur and Burdwan to oppose the Marathas,<sup>17</sup> and nervous Sheo Bhatt retreated to Cuttack.<sup>18</sup> Later on the Maratha subedar laid claim to Midnapur and the adjacent territories as parts of Orissa and in 1761 he sacked Midnapur.<sup>19</sup> The few Papers in Rev. J. Long's Selections seem to show how adventurous was the first entrance of the British in Midnapur after their acquisition of the zamindary right from the Nawab. In 1760 the Marathas threatened Midnapur town and also entered Burdwan. Sheo Bhatt established contact with the jungle zamindars. Johnstone, the first Resident at Midnapur in alarm asked for help before the Select Committee.<sup>20</sup> Sheo Bhatt then pushed forward detachments to Khirpai and Vishnupur ; and threatened Calcutta and Hooghly. On 8 February 1761, of course, it was informed that Sheo Bhatt with part of his troops had retreated. At last being attacked by the Company's troops

13. Long, Rev. J. (Ed.), *Selections from Unpublished Records*, No. 246 ; C.P.C., Vol. 2, No. 1244.

14. *Selections from Vaidya Daftar*, Vol. V, L.N. 33, October 13, 1754.

15. S.V.D., V, 24-2-56, L.N. 57 ; 1-4-55, L.N. 3.

16. C.P.C., Vol. I, Nos. 1099, 1109.

17. *Ibid*, Vol. I, No. 699.

18. *Ibid*, Vol. I, Nos. 900, 908.

19. Rev. J. Long, *Selections etc.*, No. 570.

20. Rev. J. Long, *Ibid*, No. 263-5.

he could not collect revenue from the tenants even of Patashpur which was a Maratha pargana.<sup>21</sup>

*Period of aggression and expansion*

Early in 1761 the Company chalked out a plan for driving out the Marathas from Orissa and placed the scheme before Mir Qasim. The Company would assist Mir Qasim in driving the Marathas out. In return he would assign, out of the revenues of Orissa, such a portion between Jaleswar and Cuttack to the British as would enable them to defray the expenses of the expedition.<sup>22</sup> But the plan was dropped due to Nawabs' change of mind.<sup>23</sup> Mir Qasim now eager to drive out the Company's officers negotiated with Sheo Bhatt and even sent him a sanad for Jaleswar and Midnapur.<sup>24</sup> Vansittart, the Company's pilot at that time conciliated Sheo Bhatt by writing to him that all arrears of 'chauth' would be paid if he did not join Mir Qasim.<sup>25</sup> Mir Qasim was thus side tracked but the chauth was not remitted in time. In 1764 Sheo Bhatt fell into arrears to remit revenue of Orissa and the chauth of Bengal, and Janoji got rid of him by appointing Chimna Shau.<sup>26</sup> Sheo Bhatt and his brother Bhaskar Pandit, faujdar of Balasore who had been founed in arrears in collection of revenue, also revolted against Janoji supported by the rulers of Mayurbhanj and Nilgiri.<sup>27</sup> On 27 December 1764, it was reported that the Marathas were moving for the purpose

21. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 1001.

22. Bengal Selct. Committee Proceedings, '8 Dec. 1761 ; C.P.C., I, No. 1325, 1394.

23. Ibid, 18 Feb. 1762 ; C.P.C., Vol. I, Nos. 1418, 1420.

24. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 1948.

25. Home, Miscellaneous, Vol. 33, 10 Feb. 1768.

26. Foreign, Secret Consultation Nos. 142-4, 13 April 1764 ; C.P.C., Vol. I, Nos. 2178, 2204.

27. C.P.C., Vol. I, No. 2484.

of reducing the semi-independent chiefs to obedience who were dependent on them. Major Champion with his detachment was despatched to strengthen the frontier at Jellasore.<sup>28</sup> Sheo Bhatt also negotiated with the Company and enlisted temporarily Clive's support.<sup>29</sup> But the Company very soon turned away from the rebels and sent troops to suppress Sheo Bhatt.<sup>30</sup> Sheo Bhatt till 1767 continued his frontier incursions in the border areas till 1767 and obtained sympathy of the zamindars there.<sup>31</sup> All along, the zamindars of the border areas had supported Sheo Bhatt because by enlisting his sympathy they might be able to thwart the British rule and be exempted from paying enhanced revenues demanded by the Company. In April 1767, Resident at Midnapur was enlightened that Sheo Bhatt had sent out men like Guzrat Singh into different parts of the country to induce sepoys to desert from the Company's battalions and to be employed by him.<sup>32</sup> Verelst, the then Governor at Fort William warned Vansittart, the Resident of Midnapur and requested him to take into confinement whoever might be found to be desirous of joining with the rebel Maratha faujdar.<sup>33</sup> Vansittart also proposed to annex Patashpur, the stronghold of the rebel Zamindars to stop future disturbances in lieu of Bhelorachar, a territory of the Mayurbhanj Raja.<sup>34</sup>

From 1764 the subedars of Cuttack changed their attitude towards the Company. They realised that the Bhonsle Raja could not be satisfied by regularly remitting revenues, as his demand was greater than the income from Orissa and that the chauth was difficult to be realised from the Company's territo-

28. To Hugh Watts, Resident at Midnapore from J. Spencer and others, 27 Dec. 1764 F.W.

29. *Early European Travellers in Nagpur Territories*, p. 45.

30. *Ibid*, Beng. Select. Com. Progs., 7 Oct. 1766.

31. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 63.

32. Verelst to G. Vansittart, Fort William, 24 April 1767.

33. *Ibid*, 28 April 1767.

34. G. Vansittart to Verelst, Midnapur, 5 May 1767.

ries. So they thought it more prudent to conciliate the Company than their Indian master, the Bhonsle. Chimna Sau permitted postal facilities to the British and three English gentlemen were allowed to reside Cuttack, Belasore and Malud factories.<sup>35</sup> He also offered the Company a contingent of 5000 horse against Shuja-ud dowlah.<sup>36</sup> Next faujdar Bhowani Pandit being determined to put down the rebellious frontier zamindars endeavoured at the same time to conciliate the Company.<sup>37</sup> His object was to quiet his bargir troops who were creating disturbances for want of chauth which was the source of their salary.<sup>38</sup> He was also thinking of checking the depredations of Sheo Bhatt who was extorting money from the frontier zamindars.<sup>39</sup> The cavalry of 5000 horses sent by Janoji to collect chauth forcibly from Bengal, was engaged in suppressing Sheo Bhatt and his adherents like the Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal. Bhowani Pandit was so much anxious to conciliate the Company that he sent to the British Governor a secret letter asserting that he did not support Mir Qasim or his adherents.<sup>40</sup>

But the question of 'chauth' which was inseparably connected with the frontier troubles inevitably came up.<sup>41</sup> There the clash of interest of two powers prevented arriving at a solution. This made it impossible to quiet the frontier disturbances created by the ill-paid bargirs. The Company's contention was that the Bhonsle was entitled to get the 'chauth' after the cession of Orissa to the Company as they got the Diwani of three provinces from Shah Alam II in 1765. But Janoji claimed 12 lakhs of rupees on the strength of the Treaty of 1751 between Alivardi and Raghuji. Moreover, the Emperor

35. C.P.C., Vol. I, Nos. 2191, 2204.

36. Ibid, I, 2326.

37. Ibid, I, 2513.

38. Ibid, 2429, 2431, 2450.

39. Ibid, I, 2665.

40. Ibid, I, 2494, 2665.

41. Secret Committee Proceedings, 31 January 1765.



Shah Alam also granted a farman to Janoji Bhonsle regarding Orissa and parts of Midnapur and this was intimated by Chimna Sau to J. Lowe the Resident at Cuttack.<sup>42</sup> In 1766, Clive sent Motte on a mission to Nagpur "to sound the officers of Janoji's court whether he would cede Orissa for an annual tribute", so as to "give a contiguity to the British dominions in India".<sup>43</sup> Motte met Bhawani Pandit and got from him an evasive reply. In the same year, Clive deputed Mir Zainul Abedin to the court of Nagpur to negotiate the cession of Orissa.<sup>44</sup> The vakil of Clive complained against the Government of Bhowani Pandit. Janoji desirous of settling the problem of chauth dismissed the faujdar to satisfy the Company and appointed Sambhaji Ganesh.<sup>45</sup> Thus faujdars came and went but the payment of chauth remained an unsolved problem. Janoji sent Udepuri Gossain to Calcutta in 1767 to arrive at a solution.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime the Bhonsle's financial distress had reached so acute a stage that he had to borrow money from the money-lender to pay up the salary of his troops.<sup>47</sup> Md. Reza Khan proposed the payment of 13 lakhs of rupees as chauth of Bengal on condition of the evacuation of Orissa. Udepuri Gossain insisted on the annual payment of 16 lakhs, the sum promised previously by Clive if Orissa was to be ceded.<sup>48</sup> The parties could not come to an agreement. An embassy was then sent to Cuttack on 30 April 1767, for examining the sources of Orissan revenue.<sup>49</sup>

42. Foreign, Secret Consultation, 20 June 1764, No. 311.

43. Early European Travellers etc., p. 1.

44. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 221 ; Bengal Select Committee Proceedings, 16 January, 1767. Proposals of a similar kind were placed before the Directors of the East India Company in a despatch written by Clive shortly before he left India in 1767. Vide, Talboys Wheeler's Early Records of British India, pp. 346-7.

45. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 892.

46. Ibid, II, Nos. 77, 94, 418.

47. Ibid, II, Nos. 381, 390.

48. Home, Miscellaneous, Vol. 33, 10 Feb. 1768, pp. 31-32, para 5.

49. Foreign, Secret Progs., 30 April 1767.

The President of the embassy reported that a revenue of 16 or 17 lakhs of rupees could be collected from Orissa under good government.<sup>50</sup> Janoji again offered terms when the Company decided to pay him 16 lakhs of rupees annually, but the Company was not prepared to accept all his terms.<sup>51</sup> This time Shambhaji Ganesh, the next faujdar of Cuttack held out a new proposal. He offered the services of 50,000 Maratha horse if the British desired them.<sup>52</sup> Though he reacted against it Shambhaji at last allowed the British troops under the command of Major Achmuty to march through Orissa against Hyder Ali of Mysore. He appointed a person to conduct the British troops through the pass of Rajghat.<sup>53</sup> This policy was significant. Later on during the Governor-Generalship of Hastings, the Bhonsle Raja was able to solve the problem of disbandment of his vast army by hiring them out to the Company when they needed trained troops in their wars against Hyder Ali and other antagonists. The Company also seized this opportunity as the British troops could be mobilised through Orissa to the Deccan unmolested by the Marathas. The First Anglo-Mysore War was going on, and the Peshwa seemed inclined to join Hyder Ali against the Company. At this juncture an alliance with Nagpur might be utilised in keeping Madhav Rao busy at home,<sup>54</sup> and the British troops would not be busy in checking frontier incursions. But this friendly relation between the two powers could not last long. The rumours of the Bhonsle's preparations to invade the Company's territories reached Calcutta.<sup>55</sup> In 1769, the Calcutta authorities heard that the Peshwa was determined to crush Janoji Bhonsle. Shambhaji Ganesh, the faujdar at Cuttack, requested Verelst to assist his master "at this critical

50. *Beng. Select. Com. Progs.*, 14 July 1767.

51. *Ibid*, 23 December 1768.

52. *C.P.C.*, Vol. II, No. 892.

53. *Ibid*, III, No. 135.

54. *Letter to Court*, April 6, 1769.

55. *Home, Miscellaneous*, Vol. 33, December 20, 1768.

juncture" and proposed to send an Agent to Calcutta in order to negotiate on this matter, but the Company adopted a strictly neutral policy.<sup>56</sup> The fact that the Company was very eager to maintain strict neutrality during this time was illustrated in one case. Jagannath Singh, the Raja of Singbhum being threatened by his cousin Sowanant Singh sent his uncle Pitambar Singh to Vansittart, the then Resident of Midnapur, desiring to join and settle revenue with the Company.<sup>57</sup> On 10 July 1768, Verelst asked him to make enquiry whether Singbhum belonged to the Marathas; and again on 19 March the Governor wrote to Vansittart, the then Resident of Midnapur, that as he had hoped to gain possession of Cuttack by negotiation he would rather choose to defer taking any measures regarding Singbhum till that time.

In the meantime getting no help from the Company Janoji finally submitted to Raghunath Rao at the Poona Durbar and accused the Company of duplicity and time-serving, and recalled his vakils from Calcutta.<sup>58</sup> Verelst also lost patience in negotiation for the cession of Orissa. Next Governor Shambhaji Ganesh followed a hectoring attitude towards the Company. In April 1768, he sought help from Damodar Bhanja, the Raja of Mayurbhanj for sending an expedition against Bengal in case chauth was not paid. His army consisted of 12,000 horses, 6,000 burkundazes and 6,000 men with fire-locks.<sup>59</sup> All the local officers of the Company's were frightened at the news of bargir invasion. Verelst, the Governor ordered Vansittart, the Resident to keep strict watch over the frontier.<sup>60</sup> On 28 February 1769, Vansittart from Chatna

56. Janoji also sent repeated appeals to Shah Alam, Beng. Select. Com. Progs., 21 March 1769; C.P.C., Vol. III, 45.

57. Vansittart from Balarampur to Hon'ble Verelst on 13 December 1767.

58. C.P.C., Vol. II, No. 203.

59. G. Vansittart, the Resident of Midnapur to Hon'ble Verelst, Midnapur, 15 July, 1768.

60. Hon'ble Verelst to G. Vansittart, Calcutta, 3 Aug. 1768.

wrote to Verelst that the Marathas in league with the Jungle Zamindars intended to lead an invasion to Bengal. On 24 February 1770, Vansittart informed Cartier that Sheo Bhatt had arrived at Cuttack from Patashpur by water. The British authorities were so alarmed that they posted spies at Cuttack to receive informations. Incredible informations reached the Calcutta authorities about elaborate preparations of the Marathas throughout the year 1770.<sup>61</sup> But the projected invasion ended in a fiasco. Of course, some Maratha horsemen came to the western border of the Jungle Mahals but were recalled.<sup>62</sup> The Company's officers were also all alert. A Company of troops had been kept constantly at Jellasore to prevent the encroachment of the Marathas, the desertion of the Company's sepoys<sup>63</sup> and also to prevent the molungis going into the Maratha territories.<sup>64</sup>

The British occupation of the Jungle Mahals and the strengthening of the police stations of Balarampur and Janpur and the frontier outposts in the Jellasore side, ultimately affected the economy of Bengal-Orissa border areas. It dealt a death-blow to the inland trade between Orissa and Bengal subsisting from a remote past. The salt 'beparees' (merchants) were stopped carrying cheap salt of Orissa towards Patna through the Jungle Mahals on pretence of smuggling and contraband salts were confiscated.<sup>65</sup> But this so-called smuggling continued in spite of the best endeavours of the Company to stop it. Moreover, the Company's early revenue arrangements sharply affected the economic conditions of the Zamindars in the Maratha frontiers. The zamindars were disallowed to collect any extra cess or abwab, other than land-revenue but they had to pay the enhanced revenue. The

61. Peiarce, the Resident at Midnapur to Cartier etc., 16 June, 13 July, 1770.

62. The Commander at Jungle Mahals to Peiarce, July 1770.

63. To W. Hastings from Samuel Lewis, Midnapore, 12 June 1773.

64. To W. H. Turn from S. Lewis, 18 August 1773.

65. Fergusson to Vansittart, 1 July 1767.

zamindars belonging to the Maratha territories but having lands in the British region refused to accede to this order.<sup>66</sup> The famine of 70's in Bengal had its impact on Orissa. It led to the rapid migration of population to the non-revenue paying territories of Patashpur, Kamardachour and Orissa from revenue paying territories within the Company's dominion.<sup>67</sup> The seasonal labourers like the molungies crossing the frontier engaged themselves in the khalaries (salt producing lands) of Maratha territories.<sup>68</sup> The sepoys from the Company's troops deserting in large number joined the Maratha army collected by Sheo Bhatt and his adherents, and created troubles in the frontier. Naturally this gave rise to an anarchical situation unprecedented in the history of this area which culminated in the paik uprising of 1799.

#### *Period of alliance with the Company*

The seventies of the 18th century ushered in a new epoch in the history of the British relations with the Bhonsle power of Nagpur and naturally the south-western frontier of Bengal could not escape from its impact. Two important developments taking place in this period i.e., the succession problem in the Bhonsle family and the administrative changes resulting from the Regulating Act of 1773 had considerable effect in remodeling the Anglo-Bhonsle relation of this period. Janoji Bhonsle died in May 1772.<sup>69</sup> This childless Bhonsle had adopted his nephew Raghuji, Mudhaji's son, and had appointed Mudhaji, the boy's guardian. But after his demise Sabaji, Raghuji's uncle contested the boy's claim and his unjust challenge was

66. Peiarce, the Resident to Claud Russell, the Collector-General at Fort William, Midnapur, 5 June, 1770.

67. Graham to Sumner etc., Dantoon, 25 April 1766.

68. Secret Committee Consultation, April 21, 1766, No. 14.

69. Grant Duff (Vol. II, p. 3) is wrong in saying that he was at Thaur at the time of Madhav Rao's death.

supported by the Poona Durbar.<sup>70</sup> The Durbar supported it because "Moodajee unfortunately for himself and his son, had hitherto maintained a connection with Raghunath Rao, the Raghoba, uncle of the Peshwa Narayan Rao."<sup>71</sup> So Mudhaji had no alternative but to levy troops and asserted his cause by force of arms.

Though the Bhonsle power was fast declining in its strength it was Mudhaji, the Regent after the demise of Raghuji, who wanted to extricate the crown of Nagpur from rival claimants and the overlordship of the Poona Durbar.<sup>72</sup> He also tried to maintain the integrity of his kingdom from the anticipated threats of the Nizam by maintaining an army on the expected revenue of Orissa and Bengal. He was equally sensitive to cultivate friendship with the Company and to maintain a happy balance between Calcutta and Poona. The interaction of these objectives prevented the Bhonsle to pursue a systematic policy of consolidation of Maratha authority over Orissa and the frontier Jungle Mahals.

The conflict between the Peshwa Narayan Rao and the Raghoba leading to the murder of the Peshwa threw the Bhonsle and the Company into a critical situation.<sup>73</sup> With remarkable foresight and persistence Hastings succeeded in restoring the credit of the English arms badly impaired by their defeat at the hands of the Marathas. He sought to create new diplomatic situations from which the infant British empire might derive sustenance in its hour of crisis. He secured the alliance of the Rana of Gohad, anticipated the defection of the Rajput chiefs from enforced submission to the Marathas and succeeded in seducing the Bhonsle of Nagpur from the anti-

70. Mostyn's Diary, 27 December 1772. Vide Gense and Banaji, p. 45.

71. Grant Duff, Vol. II, p. 3; Shejwalkar, T. S., (Ed) Nagpur Affairs (Marathi), Vol. I, Deccan College Monograph Series 9, Poona, 1954, p. XLIII.

72. He talked of the independence of Nagpur; Shejwalkar, Ibid, p. XLIV, L.N. 189.

73. Bengal Secret Committee Consultation, February 12, 1776, Fifth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, Appendix, No. 35.

British confederacy.<sup>74</sup> And it is here that the two powers met together. Francis urged the Company to follow a defensive alliance.<sup>75</sup> But by drawing the two states of Berar and Bengal into "a decided lasting union", Hastings projected the over-throw of the power of the Poona Government which would give the English a "lasting ascendant in its operations", and even dissipate all the designs of the French,<sup>76</sup> because Hastings had judged Mudhaji 'a fit instrument' to take the place of Raghunath Rao,<sup>77</sup> and to the end he recommended a deputation to be led by Elliot to the Court of Berar.<sup>78</sup> After the untimely death of Elliot on 12 September Hastings urged on the march of Leslie's detachment through the Nagpur territories.<sup>79</sup> But Leslie also did not live long to receive the order of recall who died on 3 October.<sup>80</sup>

Mudhaji followed a cautious policy<sup>81</sup> and wanted to maintain a balance between the two powers ;—the Company and the Peshwa. In his anxiety to make Nagpur state independent he was far too cautious enough not to fall under the influence of Hastings. He knew that he had no family tie with the Chhatrapati. But the news that the Bombay Council wanted to prop up Raghunath Rao to the Poona Government reached the Bhonsle and stiffened his attitude towards the Company.<sup>82</sup>

74. Sen, Sailendra Nath, *Anglo-Maratha Relations (1772-1785)*, Calcutta, 1961.

75. Foreign Department, Secret Consultation, 11 July 1778, No. 17.

76. Foreign Dept. Sec. Cons., 9 July 1778, No. 2.

77. British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 29, 117 ; Hastings to Eyre Coote, 21 January 1779.

78. B.M. Add. Mss. 29, 141 ; Hastings to Elliot, 2 August 1778,

79. For. Dept. Sec. Progs, 7 Oct. 1778, Vol. 39, pp. 2085-2099.

80. B.M. Add. Mss. 29, 141 ; Cockerell to Hastings, 3 Oct. 1778.

81. Due to the bitter wrangling arising out of the Regulating Act and the Treaty of Surat between Bengal and Bombay Presidencies. Vide : S. N. Sen, *Anglo-Maratha Relations (1772-1785)*.

82. For. Dept. Sec. Cons., 1 Feb. 1779, No. F ; Watherstone to Goddard, 20 Dec. 1778 ; B.M. Add. Mss. 29, 119 ; Goddard to Hastings, 15 January 1779.

It also gave rise to a suspicion about the real intention of the Bhonsle Raja in the hearts of the British authorities.<sup>83</sup> This suspicion was soon intensified due to the formation of an anti-British coalition among the Peshwa, Bhonsle, the Nizam and Hyder early in 1780. Nizam Ali was the moving spirit and 'the projector of this alliance.'<sup>84</sup> Mudhaji was compelled by circumstances to shoulder the unpleasant burden of sending an expedition to Bengal.<sup>85</sup> The financial crisis had reached an acute stage as the bankers had left Nagpur and the loans of Mudhaji still remained unpaid.<sup>86</sup> The projected invasion of Bengal was also ill-fated. In course of the march the condition of the troops became pathetically unbearable<sup>87</sup> due to the lack of food and rainy weather. The Raja of Dhenkanal became hostile, communication became difficult to maintain. Sena Bahadar Khandoji and Bhawanikalo still intended to proceed to Mayurbhanj but the men in the army refused. Thus the projected invasion remained idle in the frontier, committing frequent hostilities and keeping the British arms in awe of an expected clash.

Hastings had doubt regarding the sincerity of Mudhaji's former professions and assurances but at heart he could not keep his carefully nursed idea of sowing dissension among the Maratha powers into the cold storage. He sent Capt. Baillie to Cuttack to receive information,<sup>88</sup> and coming to know

83. C.P.C., Vol. V, L.N. 1639 ; For. Dept. Sec. Cons., 23 December 1779, No. B.

84. Gleig, G. R., *Memoirs of the Life of Rt. Hon. Warren Hastings*, First Governor-General of Bengal, Vol. II, London, 1841, p. 315 ; Hastings to Sullivan, 27 August, 1780.

85. Shejwalkar, *Nagpur Affairs*, L.N., 201. He wanted to counteract the idea of the Poona Court that he had entered into a secret pact with the English for the joint invasion of the Peshwa's territories which had produced consternation in Peshwa's Durbar. Ibid. L.Ns. 53-54.

86. Ibid, L.N. 113.

87. Ibid, L N's 100-102, 301.

88. Ibid, No. 103.



of the real condition of the Maratha army approaching Bengal, he opened talks late in 1780 with the Bhonsle agents, Khandoji and Bhabani Kalo. Mudhaji as usual followed a cautious policy. He wanted to keep the private wire open with the English without breaking his ties with the Poona Durbar. He was unable to resist in future any possible brunt of the Maratha-Mysore-Nizam pressure upon him and also did not like to incur the enmity of the English by engaging in hostilities with them. That was why Naro Pandit, the Peshwa's vakil who was with the Bhonsle's army, complained of their slow progress and suspected that the Maharaja's officers had been the secret allies of the English.<sup>89</sup> And this policy of masterly inactivity of Chimna Babu in Cuttack was not prompted by merely a sentimental attachment of the Bhonsle towards the Company as it was thought by Sardesai,<sup>90</sup> but prompted by the difficult situation.

From the beginning of 1761 two types of attitude developed among the British rulers on two different levels towards the Marathas of Orissa. The Company's officers in Midnapore and the Jungle Mahals had urged the Government to take strong measures against the Marathas to expel them from Orissa so that the Jungle Mahals could be effectively pacified, a land route towards the Deccan through Orissa could be made safe and a monopoly in salt trade could be established by checking inland smuggling. Whereas, the authorities at Calcutta wanted to pacify the Bhonsle by following the traditional policy of creating dissension among the Maratha powers. This policy was, no doubt, pursued by Hastings with the result that the Maratha power in Orissa got a long lease of life upto 1803. Realising the gravity of sufferings of Chimnaji's forces owing to scarcity of food on the eve of the Dhenkanal expedition, Warren Hastings sent him some supplies of food to develop friendly relation with the Rhonsle.

89. C.P.C., Vol V, L.N. 1959.

90. Sardesai, G. S., *A New History of the Marathas*, Vol. III, Bombay, 1918, p. 98. Sen, S. N., *Anglo-Maratha Relations*, p. 183.

Meanwhile on receipt of the news of Hyder Ali's invasion of Arcot, Hastings had determined to send overland to Madras a Company of European artillery and a body of six battalions of Native infantry under the command of Lieut. Col. Pearse in January 1781 and naturally he was eager to finalise the Maratha affairs. Anderson was deputed to reconcile Chinnaji lest the approach of the British Army might lead to 'serious and alarming consequences.'<sup>91</sup> The result of Anderson's mission was a treaty concluded on 2 April 1781, which provided besides the other clauses.

- a) A body of 2,000 effective horse should be placed under the command of Col. Pearse against Hyder at the cost of one lakh of rupees per month ;
- b) An offer should be made to Chinnaji of 13 lakhs of rupees for paying the arrears of his army and a further loan of 10 lakhs was also provided for.<sup>92</sup>

During the course of this transaction the detachment under the command of Pearse proceeded quietly to Ganjam.<sup>93</sup> Thus Hastings succeeded in converting 'an ostensible enemy into a declared friend'. The propriety of Hastings's policy of bribing the Bhonsle was questioned by later historians.<sup>94</sup> No doubt, the Bhonsle was pathetically in need of money in order to restrain his army from creating disturbances in south-western Bengal and Hastings only followed the same tactics as was

91. Forrest, G. W., *Selections from Letters, Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772-1785*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1890, pp. 204-256.

92. *Ibid.* II, pp. 254-256.

93. B.M. Add. Mss, 29, 215. Col. Pearse's journey from Bengal to Madras written by Capt. P. Douglas.

Vide *A Memoir of Col. T. D. Pearse of the Bengal Artillery, Bengal : Past and Present*, Vol. III, 1909, p. 65.

Mangur Choudhuri and Nandar Khan was instructed to accompany the British army to the border of Ganjam, C.P.C., Vol. VI, No. 87.

94. S. N. Sen, *Anglo-Maratha Relations*, p. 185.

chalked out to him by his predecessors.<sup>95</sup> "He saved Bengal" as Grant Duff puts it, "at a moment when, with thirty thousand horses they might have pillaged Bengal and burnt the towns from Burdwan to point Palmyras".<sup>96</sup> Simultaneously he also initiated the task of conciliating the Poona ministers through the mediation of Mudhaji Bhonsle and sent Chapman to Nagpur in January 1782 to exhort the Bhonsle. Divakar Pant, the Diwan of Mudhaji, was after all sensible of 'the value of an alliance between the Poona ministers and the English'.<sup>97</sup> The Bhonsle's relation with the Nizam was by no means cordial and British arms were necessary for him against any possible incursions.<sup>98</sup> He was also anxious to interpose his good offices for reaping credit and advantages from the settlement to save the degeneration of his power and financial crisis. But his plan overshot the mark because the negotiations resulting in the treaty of Salbai on 17 May 1782, were the work of Mahadji Sindhia without participation of other members of the Maratha Confederacy. Mudhaji gave vent to his resentment and even suspected the fidelity of Sindhia.<sup>99</sup> And Hastings also left no stone unturned to keep the Bhonsle in good humour against possible menace from Hyder Ali till his departure on 6 February 1785.<sup>100</sup>

*Period of creeping degeneration of the Bhonsle power*

The departure of Hastings (Feb. 1785) and the death of Mudhaji on 9 May 1788, gave a new turn to the history of the Anglo-Bhonsle relation. The reins of government passed without disturbance to Raghuji II. During this period the

95. Letter to Court of Directors, 30 April 1781. Sixth Report from the Com. of Secrecy, App. No. 365.

96. Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 143.

97. G.P.C., Vol. VI, No. 159.

98. For. Dept. Sec. Cons., 18 March 1782, No. 3.

99. B.M. Add. Mss. 29, 155 ; Chapman to Hastings, 29 July 1782.

100. But according to C. U. Wills he departed from India in Feb. 1785. Vide : *Nagpur in the 18th Century*, p. 85.

strength of the Bhonsle arms was declining fast, financial bankruptcy was mounting up which led to a change in the British attitude towards the Bhonsle. The financial bankruptcy of the Nagpur Court and all the factors accompanying this state of condition led to ruination of economic life of the countryside of Orissa. And taking advantage of the weakness of the Central authority at Nagpur the Cuttack Faujdars like Rajaram Pandit (D. 1793) and Sadasiv Rao (1799-1803) could not fail to assume independent authority. The Orissan zamindars impoverished by this measure of economic dislocation, began to commit incursions in the south-western frontier of Bengal.

The political weakness induced Mudhaji to make a complete submission to the Poona Durbar in 1785 and he was induced by the Durbar to demand Chauth from the Bengal Government.<sup>101</sup> Though avowedly indignant, the Governor-General Macpherson paid Mudhaji extraordinary attention through Malet, the Resident at Poona.<sup>102</sup> The political situation further deteriorated when the arrival of Cornwallis in 1786 synchronised with the formation of a tripple alliance between Tipu, the Nizam and the Marathas in 1787. Following the traditional policy Forrester was deputed to Nagpur to form a fresh alliance and to seek the Bhonsle's permission to march the British army overland through the south-western region of Orissa.<sup>103</sup> The internal exhaustion of the Bhonsle and the Bhonsle's fear of the Poona aggrandisement could not escape his notice.<sup>104</sup> He sketched Raghuji as cruel, deceitful and notoriously deficient in his payments to the army. He also reported that in his financial distress the Bhonsle extorted money from the wealthy officers and bankers as his revenue

101. Grant Duff, II, pp. 192-3.

102. Ibid, p. 184.

103. Kale, Y. M. (Ed) Poona Residency Correspondence, Nagpur Affairs, Vol. 5, (1781-1820), No. 2.

104. Ibid, Nos. 3, 5.

was inadequate to the expenditure of his army.<sup>105</sup> Cornwallis realised that "no advantage would be obtained from a connection with that government and that the acquisition of strategically important Orissa could be made only by employing force."<sup>106</sup> This was a complete reversal of the policy towards Nagpur pursued by his predecessors and its logical culmination was reached in Wellesley's time with the complete annexation of Orissa in defiance of the legal rights of the Bhonsle House of Nagpur. To the contemporary people the annexation appeared to be unlawful and this added force to many of the anti-British movements of the subsequent years.

In his utter distress Raghuji allowed himself to be engulfed by Nana Phadnavis who promised the Bhonsle financial help of ten lakhs of rupees for furnishing equal number of men to the service of the Peshwa.<sup>107</sup> To stop renewed incursions of Tipu on 1 June 1790, the Bhonsle also offered the service of 8,000 horses to the Company at a high rate of subsidy and naturally his demand was turned down.<sup>108</sup>

The weakness of the Nagpur Court reached its climacteric point when Forrester in 1789 complained of frontier incursions of the Maratha bargirs in the south-western Bengal. The Raja made a show of meeting the British remonstrance by deputing the old Subedar Mahadaji Hari to Cuttack. In fact, he was disinclined to interfere in Orissa so long as he obtained regular revenue. But Cuttack was groaning under over-taxation to meet Raghuji's financial crisis and the frontier incursions are but the symptoms of that chronic disease.<sup>109</sup>

105. Select and Political Progs., 27 May 1789, L.N. 2.

106. Sel. and Pol. Progs., 8 April, 1789.

107. Grant Duff, II, pp. 266-7.

108. Forrester was again deputed to Nagpur with Leckie on 22 March 1790. Leckie pointed out the inadequacy of revenue to maintain a large army and the Bhonsle offered the service of 8,000 horses to the English on payment of Rs. 400/- per annum for each man. Early European Travellers etc., p. 91.

109. Sec. and Pol. Progs., 1 April 1789, No. 4.

Further deterioration of the Bhonsle's economic and political positions may be studied from Capt. Blunt's journal who after the death of Forrester in January 1791, was deputed to Nagpur in January 1795, "to explore a route through that part of India which lies between Berar, Orissa and the northern sarkars."<sup>110</sup> Necessity compelled Raghuji in February 1795, to join the Peshwa's army at Ahmednagar with about 12,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry and 15 guns. They defeated the Nizam at the battle of Kharda.<sup>111</sup> The refusal of Sir John Shore in 1795 to assist the Nizam no doubt strengthened the position of Nagpur in the diplomatic front but Bhonsle's power was declining fast in Central India. The army mutinied, Pindari troubles renewed strength and Orissa dropped regular payment.<sup>112</sup> In May 1798, Wellesley took over charge of Governor-Generalship and quickly realised the dangers of inaction on the face of growing French menace outside India and the avowed hostility of Tipu in Mysore and his secret connection with Napoleon. He decided on war with Tipu and deputed Colebrooke to Nagpur for negotiating an alliance. There he arrived on 18 March 1799.<sup>113</sup> But the Bhonsle followed the usual delaying tactics of his father and did not accept the subsidiary alliance.<sup>114</sup>

This gradual decline of the Bhonsle power and the simultaneous change in the British attitude towards the Bhonsle had their repercussions on the situation in the south-western Bengal. The renewed vigour of the frontier troubles which had continued from the 60's of the century with the beginning of British impact in this area may be studied under three

110. *Early European Travellers etc.*, p. 91.

111. Grant Duff, II, pp. 283-287.

112. *Sec. and Pol. Progs.*, 1 April 1789, No. 4 ; Y. M. Kale, *Nagpur Affairs*, No. 58.

113. Y. M. Kale, *Ibid*, No. 16.

114. Colebrooke, T. E., *Colebrooke, Life and Essays of H. T. Colebrooke*, pp. 131-133 ; Y. M. Kale, *Ibid*, Nos. 53, 54 dated 16.1.1801 and 21.1.1801.

aspects. The clash of arms arising out of frontier disputes among the zamindars for demarcation of areas was one such aspect. The frontier incursions committed by lawless elements and impoverished agricultural community who had been thrown out of existing economic machinery partly due to British pressure of systematisation of land revenue and partly due to the Maratha pressure of heavy extortion were no less important. And lastly, the conflict arising out of a large-scale migration of population and the secret transportation of commodities through the long prevalent but ruthlessly suppressed inland trade within the nimki and jungle mahals was another aspect. Therefore, the frontier troubles of the period though apparently political in complexion were socio-economic in character.

The definition of boundary line between the British and Maratha territories remained a vexed problem throughout the 18th century. By the treaty of 1751 between Alivardi and Raghuji I the frontier of Bengal was generally fixed along the Subarnarekha.<sup>115</sup> But the frontier zamindars owned lands on both sides of the over-changing river. The difference in revenue system of the two powers led to conflict of interest among the zamindars. This clash of interest leading often to clash of arms between two governments reached an acute stage after the 80's of the century mainly due to two factors : Enhancement of land revenue but taking away of the zamindar's right of imposing 'abwabs' or extra-imposts on the land ; and heavy extortion of *peshcush* by the Maratha faujdars and consequent decline of the central authority to keep tight the faujdars' establishments. One Lochana Choudhury, a zamindar in the Maratha territories in June 1785, forcibly took possession of properties of Asharam Choudhury, a zamindar of Lapoochar. After a long deliberation, negotiations having failed, Ensign Campbell commanded a detachment and

115. *Seir-Mutakherin*, Vol. 2, pp. 590-91.

restored Asharam his robbed properties.<sup>116</sup> As the boundaries were often overlapping the Maratha Zamindars often imposed duties on the people of British territories as a reaction to British policy of taking away the zamindars old rights to impose extra imposts.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes the rebellious Maratha zamindars for avoiding payment after a fight took shelter under the British territories. Durp Singh Deo of Manpur who took shelter in the fort of Tapung in 1789 was one of them to escape the hands of Rajaram Pandit.<sup>118</sup> Jagabandhu Patnaik and Bairagi Bhanja, the Mayurbhanj Raja's agents who used to attend the office of the Maratha Government for paying land revenue absconded to Jaleswar.<sup>119</sup> The frontier disputes often led to long continued clash of arms. Balasore faujdar complained about the frequent disputes between the zamindars of Gugneswar, Naraingarh and Raghunath Pikara, the Maratha zamindars of Kollar. Similarly, Dullal Kooar entered Naya-basan and committed hostilities on Kearchi in January 1790.<sup>120</sup>

This emigration of population from one to other territories was prompted by various reasons. Not only the defaulting zamindars, talookdars and ryots escaped punishment by emigration to the territories of others but people also made their escape to avoid the payment of loan.<sup>121</sup> One Muhammad Ali fled to Murshidabad to escape paying loans of Rs. 1,500 to Sadashib Rao, son of Rajaram Pandit.<sup>122</sup> The seasonal labours like the Molungis and weavers very often fled away to

116. From J. L. Chauvet to Samuel Charles, President etc, Committee of Revenue, Jellalore, 16 June 1785 ; C.P.C., Vol. 5, No. 252.

117. Progs. of G.G. in C., Vol. 80, 8 April 1784, pp. 294-95 ; C.P.C., No. 1093.

118. Sec. and Pol. Progs., 1 April 1789, No. 4 ; Letter from Rajaram to Bissemer.

119. C.P.C., Vol. IX, No. 724.

120. Kearchanddip : Progs. and Correspondence between Balasore and Midnapur, 6 January 1790. Mid. Coll.

121. C.P.C., Vol. VIII, Nos. 306, 317, 1420, 1508.

122. C.P.C., I, 310.



the Maratha territories of Patashpur, Bhograi and Kamardachour to escape the rigour and almost the slave-life in the Hijli agency, in the 80's of 18th century. The desertion of army-men from the Company's troops to the Maratha territories was a regular feature.<sup>123</sup> But the most noticeable feature of this transplantation was the emigration of the agricultural community from the British territories to those of the Marathas where less land-revenue was payable. To stop emigration the Company stationed chowkies ineffectively to prevent deserters.

Like the boundary dispute the frontier incursions were also prompted by lawless spirit as a protest against the governments attempts to systematise land-revenue and to reorganise thanadary establishment after taking these away from the zamindar's hands. In the Maratha territories the paiks, naiks, zamindary amlas and even talookdars who owned lands in the British territories but without stock and who had endured so long heavy economic exactions of the Maratha faujdars were aggrieved at the British revenue experiment. They found themselves thrown out of the production sector overnight. They took to violence and herds of cattle, plough, grain and other means of agricultural productions became their target of attacks. In 1779 one Basharat Khan of Balasore took away 404 heads of cattle from the British territories. In spite of joint enquiry of Amins the British subjects retaliated by seizing some buffaloes of Sagar Dutta of Balasore in 1779. Peiarce from Midnapore informed the Committee of Revenue in 1781 that as a punishment for committing depredations in the Maratha territories Josadanandan, zamindar of Tirkuachour in Jaleswar district was deposed from his property which was given over to his brother Debinandan with a sanad.<sup>124</sup> A Jellasore letter dated 9 March states that Maratha soldiers in 1785

123. Progs. of G.G. in C., 16 Sept. 1799, pp. 3679-84, No. 18, B.S. 245-9; C.P.C., VI, No. 189.

124. Ibid, 26 June 1781, No. 46.

carried fire and sword in the neighbourhood of Rani Sarai in Belorachour and the ryots had taken alarm and shelter in the jungles.<sup>125</sup> The encouragement and shelter given by some zamindars to robbers was another cause of disturbance.

Peiarce from Midnapur sent a thanadar and 21 sepoy for the protection of the people.<sup>126</sup> The Bhonsle was also informed of this frequent occurrence of violence and investigation by joint aumeens was urged.<sup>127</sup> Ramnarayan Mallick, zamindar of Varungachoir, Rajballav Choudhury of Gugneswar complained in June 1787, of Raghunath Pikara's depredations to Peiarce.<sup>128</sup> Several ryots complained by an arzee of oppression committed by the zamindar of Patashpur which required representation to the Maratha tahasildars of Patashpur.<sup>129</sup> On 26 April 1790, informations reached that Lapoochour was plundered by Man Govin, the Maratha zamindar of Omardachour. These depredations illustrated one fact that the British reorganisation of the faujdary establishments was inadequate and that it had to station military detachments at different frontier chaukies to strengthen their numbers at strategic points. But Police watch-posts were established at different frontier points of the south-western frontier only for suppressing an inland trade between Orissa and Bengal which adversely affected the economic condition of the region.

To these frontier incursions the Company's local officers looked cautiously and stationed troops at various strategic points. Thus when alarming news reached that Maratha force had reached the neighbourhood of Balasore, the local officer Chauvet in March 1785, took adequate measures to strengthen

125. Progs. of Com. of Rev., 14 March 1785, p. 209.

126. Comm. of Rev., 6 April 1786, p. 201, 3 Aug. 1786, pp. 89-92.

127. Board of Rev., Vol. 4, 5 Sept. 1786.

128. Ibid, Vol. 19, p. 24. From Peiarce to Sir John Shore, President etc., Board of Rev., 9 June 1787.

129. Jellasore correspondence, Putanbbun, 19 Aug. 1789, Mid. Collectorate.

the chaukies.<sup>130</sup> The Maratha territory of Patashpur was a constant source of troubles to the Collector of Midnapur and Peiarce, the Collector took some strong steps against the Maratha bargirs. He was, however, directed by the Board of Revenue in April 1786, to refrain from reprisals and to contend himself in the defence of his district.<sup>131</sup> Peiarce was also instructed to settle disputes by amicable negotiations rather than by force.<sup>132</sup> For administrative convenience in July 1786, Jellasore was made an independent chakla under a Resident<sup>133</sup> but was rejoined with Midnapore in April 1787 under the jurisdiction of its collector.<sup>134</sup>

Side by side with the strengthening of frontier outposts by stationing military detachments the Calcutta Council was mindful to have Cuttack through negotiation for maintaining peace in the frontier and above all, to secure a land route through Orissa towards Madras. From 1786 it became increasingly clear that Orissa could not be possessed except by force because the revenues of Cuttack, as the British said were something which the Bhonsle could not surrender if he was to remain supreme in Central India against the pretensions of his aggressive neighbours. Naturally the Company thought of settlement of boundary disputes. Forrester had complained before Raghuji about frontier troubles. Colebrooke, the Resident of Nagpur requested the Bhonsle to bring about an amicable settlement of boundaries in Midnapur and he even threatened to adopt severe measures on the face of reluctant Raja of Nagpur to part with any portion of his territories.<sup>135</sup>

130. J. L. Chauvet to W. Cowper, Acting President etc. the Com. of Rev., 9 March 1785.

131. W. Cowper, President etc. to Peiarce, the Collector, Fort William, 6 April 1786.

132. Ibid, 16 June 1786.

133. Ibid, 13 July 1786.

134. Ibid, 10 April 1787.

135. Y. M. Kale, Nagpur Affairs, No. 56.

He also proposed an exchange of territories, if possible. But the negotiations evidently failed.<sup>136</sup>

Lastly, Wellesley's aggressive policy prompted by the "Francophobia" made an outbreak of hostilities inevitable. Refusal of the Bhonsle to led to his eventual defeat at the battle of Aragaon. With the fall of Gwaligarh the Bhonsle was compelled to sue for peace in the Treaty of Deogaon on 17 December 1803. The terms were severe as they involved a reduction of Raghuji's revenue by about 45 lakhs of rupees out of a total 111 lakhs.<sup>137</sup> The Bhonsle had to cede Orissa and parts of Midnapur to the Company. Thus in 1804 as the conflicts came to an end the south-western portion of Bengal settled down to peaceful conditions and now the Company thus possessed a continuous belt of coast line towards Orissa with a rich and fertile land.

136. Ibid, No. 64.

137. Jenkins Report, 1826, pp. 119-122.

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3. General letters issued 1764-1805 with many laps of years.

4. Settlement letters received 1789-1806.
5. Hidgellce salt letters received 1786-1805.
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